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Monthly Film Review

1/6

November

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Note: All films have been selected mainly for their very fine camera work and thus can easily be followed and understood by those who do not speak the French language.

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SIGHT AND SOUND'S GUIDE TO CURRENT FILMS

Brief Pointers to the principal films showing in British cinemas during November. Last-minute changes of programme after our press-date may cause one or two inaccuracies (chiefly in the London area) but we hope this list may serve as a useful general guide. Films with an asterisk are particularly recommended.

ANNIE GET YOUR GUN (*M.G.M.*). Lavish though uninspired technicolor version of the pleasing Irving Berlin musical. (Betty Hutton, Howard Keel: director George Sidney.)

BLACK ROSE, The (*Fox*). Large-scale costume piece about a 13th century Englishman who serves under a Mongol leader: plenty of spectacle. (Tyrone Power, Cecile Aubry, Orson Welles: director, Henry Hathaway.)

BRIGHT LEAF (*Warners*). Period study of the rise and fall of a tobacco tycoon; a heavy-going and novelettish. (Gary Cooper, Patricia Neal, Lauren Bacall: director, Michael Curtiz.)

BROKEN ARROW (*Fox*). Energetic, competent technicolor western in which a U.S. army scout mediates successfully between white men and red indians. (James Stewart, Jeff Chandler: director, Delmer Daves.)

CAGED (*Warners*). Competent, journalistic, oversensational account of conditions in a women's prison, and of the debasement of one of the inmates. (Eleanor Parker, Agnes Moorehead, Hope Emerson: director, John Cromwell.)

CAGE OF GOLD (*G.F.D.*). Somewhat feeble melodrama about an ex-wingcommander turned crook who marries, deserts his wife, and returns to blackmail her; tension created, but dissipated. (Jean Simmons, David Farrar, James Donald: director, Basil Dearden.)

DAMNED DON'T CRY, The (*Warners*). Joan Crawford vehicle about the sufferings of a housewife anxious for easy money, who falls in with criminals: inconvincing. (David Brian, Steve Cochran: director, Vincent Sherman.)

DESTINATION MOON (*G.F.D.*). American rocketeers plant the national flag on the moon. Scientifiction translated to the screen; lacking in imagination, but exciting at times. (John Archer, Warner Anderson; director, Irving Pichtl.)

FANCY PANTS (*Paramount*). Bob Hope as an American actor in England, hired by a rugged western family to act as their butler. The star battles hard with some very tired jokes. (Lucille Ball: director, George Marshall.)

***FANNY** (*G.C.T.*). The second part of Marcel Pagnol's richly flavoured trilogy of Provencal life. Fine acting. (Raimu, Pierre Fresnay: director, Marc Allegret, 1932.)

FATHER OF THE BRIDE (*M.G.M.*). Pleasant, skilful, light comedy about the excitements of a small-town marriage. (Spencer Tracy, Joan Bennett, Elizabeth Taylor: director, Vincente Minnelli.)

GONE TO EARTH (*London Films*). A simple Shropshire girl marries a clergyman but falls prey to a member of the landed gentry: she deserts both for her pet fox and falls down a mineshaft. Technicolor. (Jennifer Jones, David Farrar: directors, Powell and Pressburger.)

GUNFIGHTER, The (*Fox*). A tired, ageing western gunman tries to retire, but finds himself unable to avoid a life of violence. Well made and quite interesting western. (Gregory Peck, Millard Mitchell: director, Henry King.)

***HEIRESS, The** (*Paramount*). Much-Oscared screen version of the successful play based on Henry James' "Washington Square" about a girl whose character is hardened by her father's disapproval and the defection of a fortune hunter. Polished, skilful, elaborate, but ultimately disappointing. (Olivia de Havilland, Montgomery Clift, Ralph Richardson: director, William Wyler.)

MANON (*Grand National*). Clouzot's modern, very freely adapted version of *Manon Lescaut*: occasionally brilliant, generally flashy, intermittently censored. (Michel Auclair, Cecile Aubry, Serge Reggiani.)

MINIVER STORY, The (*M.G.M.*). The famous Mrs. Miniver continues her adventures into peacetime, and dies of an incurable illness brought on by war strain. Inordinately sentimental. (Greer Garson, Walter Pidgeon: director, H. C. Potter.)

NO WAY OUT (*Fox*). Latest in the American racial cycle: the story of a young coloured doctor who operates unsuccessfully on a white man, whose family and friends stir up race hatred in consequence. Uneven, but with some excellent scenes. (Richard Widmark, Linda Darnell: director, Joseph Mankiewicz.)

***PANIC IN THE STREETS** (*Fox*). A New Orleans manhunt, under the threat of an outbreak of plague. Sharp, exciting, well-written and directed location thriller. (Richard Widmark, Barbara Bel Geddes, Paul Douglas: director, Elia Kazan.)

SENZA PIETA (*Blue Ribbon*). A white girl and a negro G.I. caught in the aftermath of war in Leghorn: some effective surface detail but no emotional conviction. (Carla del Poggio, John Kitzmuller: director, Alberto Lattuada.)

***SEVEN DAYS TO NOON** (*British Lion*). Exciting thriller about the pursuit of a professor who has gone out of his mind, stolen a bomb, and threatened to blow up London. Realistic, tense, and intelligent. (Barry Jones, Olive Sloane: director, John Boulting.)

STATE SECRET (*British Lion*). British melodrama about an American surgeon on the run in the central European police state of Vosnia. Lack of incisiveness diminishes excitement. (Douglas Fairbanks Jnr., Glynis Johns, Herbert Lom: director, Sidney Gilliat.)

***SUNSET BOULEVARD** (*Paramount*). The strange affair of a silent movie star, dreaming of a come-back and a young Hollywood scriptwriter, ends in spectacular tragedy. Very intriguing. (Gloria Swanson, William Holden, Erich von Stroheim: director, Billy Wilder.)

***SYLVIE ET LE FANTOME** (*Film Traders*). A young girl finally rejects a ghost for a real lover: charming and witty romantic comedy. (Odette Joyeux, Francois Perier, Jacques Tati: director, Claude Autant-Lara.)

TRIO (*G.F.D.*). Three more of Somerset Maugham's clever short stories: they survive rather undistinguished treatment. (Jean Simmons, Nigel Patrick, James Hayter, Michael Rennie: directors, Ken Annakin and Harold French.)

***WAGONMASTER** (*R.K.O.*). John Ford picture about a Mormon trek to new land; grand, invigorating western. (Ben Johnson, Joanne Dru, Ward Bond.)

WHITE TOWER, The (*R.K.O.*). An Alpine climb delayed and confused by prolonged discussions as to the party's reasons for climbing: some effective mountain excitements, typed characters, and heavy talk. (Glenn Ford, Valli, Cedric Hardwicke, Claude Rains: director, Ted Tetzlaff.)

WOODEN HORSE, The (*British Lion*). A sober, capable, though somewhat conventional, version of the famous escape story. (Leo Genn, Anthony Steel, David Tomlinson: director, Jack Lee.)

Sight & Sound

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ON THE COVER: Judy Garland in a number from *If you should feel like Singing*, a new musical with Gene Kelly.

Owing to the dispute in the London printing trade, it has not been possible to publish September and October issues of SIGHT & SOUND. A special double issue will be published early next year, in addition to the normal issues, and sent free to present subscribers.

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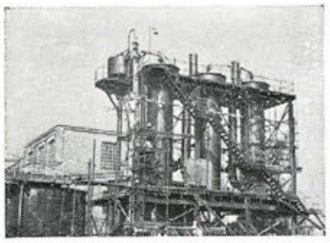

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The Front Page

The Question of Survival

THE NEW ANGLO-AMERICAN film finance agreement, recently reached in principle, comes into operation for a year on October 1st, 1950. At the time of going to press details of its operation have not been announced, but the agreement is significant in that it marks a departure from previous practice. By the terms of the 1948 agreement, American companies were permitted to take 17 million dollars a year of their British earnings out of this country; their remaining earnings were blocked, but they were also allowed dollars equivalent to the earnings in America of British films. A pool was established, out of which each company drew its share.

By the new agreement, this pool is replaced by a bonus scheme; dollars over and above the 17 million will go, according to the Board of Trade statement, to the individual companies, "in proportion either to their expenditure on film production in Britain, or to their expenditure on the purchase of American rights to British-made films, or to the amount earned by British-made films they have distributed in America".

The agreement therefore gives two incentives to the American companies. It encourages them to distribute British films, since the return will now be made according to the individual efforts of the companies rather than through a general pool. It also encourages American companies to spend a higher proportion of their British earnings on film production in this country.

This part of the bonus scheme introduces a new note in British Government policy. In the past, the blocking of American earnings was intended simply as a move to save dollars; now, as *The Economist* has pointed out, "the Board of Trade has agreed after all to spend extra dollars, in return for the creation of employment in British film studios". Where the need to save dollars, and the need to prevent increasing unemployment have come into conflict, the Government have found it necessary to realign their policy.

This compels us to consider the whole economic situation of the British film industry. Films made in Britain by American companies employ British technicians, British small part actors, and sometimes a British star: they form part of the British quota. But, to give a few recent examples, *Stage Fright*, *Night and the City* and *Treasure Island*, with their American producers, directors, script writers and players cannot, by the widest stretch of imagination, be described as British films—they are too, for obvious reasons, slanted to the demands of the American market. To profit from their frozen dollars, American companies may increase their production in Britain, and so give employment to British technicians; such American assistance is necessary for the British film industry, but many people are disturbed that this should be so.

In a sense, the new agreement seems to give support to the view expressed by many authorities (including *The Economist*) that the British film production industry is not able, and indeed never has been able, to stand economically upon its own feet. There is great concern about this state of affairs: can the British

production industry survive? how was the present situation arrived at? what solutions may there be? There may be no way out of the wood, but before suggesting solutions it is first necessary that the facts should be known. In a series of articles beginning next month SIGHT AND SOUND will discuss the economic situation of the industry, and endeavour to give these relevant facts.

A Return to Arms

THE RENEWED OUTPUT of American war films—in the last year we have seen *Task Force*, *Command Decision*, *Sands of Iwo Jima*, *Twelve o'Clock High*, *Battleground*—shows no signs of abating. No doubt they reflect a national mood; at least one of them, *Twelve o'Clock High*, attempts a serious analysis of relationships under strain, though some of the others are distinctly crude; what one regrets is that not one of them shows much awareness that war is, amongst many other things, a tragedy. A welcome antidote to this was provided by a showing to critics, through the enterprise of *Sequence* and the courtesy of M.G.M., of John Ford's *They Were Expendable*, made in 1945, passed over at the time, and now surviving wonderfully as one of the truest and most deeply felt films ever made about war. Readers are advised that this remarkable film is still occasionally to be caught at various cinemas on Sundays: one would like to see it properly revived.

Meanwhile, one looks forward to the forthcoming presentation of Lewis Milestone's long-delayed, reputedly pacifist *A Walk in the Sun*, with Henry Fonda, Richard Conte and Dana Andrews, made also in 1945 and now acquired by a firm in this country. It should make a most interesting comparison with his *All Quiet on the Western Front*, which is also to be shown again soon.

Affaire Hecht

Since Ben Hecht expressed his jubilation at the death of every British soldier in Palestine, the trade in Britain has decided to ban films scripted by him. The ban operated most recently in the case of *Love Happy*, the latest Marx Brothers picture; in the case of *Too Dangerous to Love*, adapted from a play written by Hecht and Charles MacArthur, the former's name was merely omitted from the credits. Now, one wonders whether exhibitors are aware that a new thriller, *Where the Sidewalk Ends*, is also scripted by the redoubtable Hecht. It is true that on the credits as published in this country the script purports to be by a certain Rex Connor, but one look at the credits released in America reveals Mr. Connor's identity. If the ban on Hecht is to be removed, let it be done publicly.

The rapidity with which films vanish from general circulation, and the small proportion of them that are brought out again for revival, is a source of constant heartache. Although film societies now complement to a large extent the shortage of repertory cinemas, both these are hindered by the limited number of worthwhile films available. The loss is sometimes due to reasons beyond ordinary control (as when Chaplin withdraws most of his feature films, or *Le Jour se lève* is suppressed because it has been remade in America), but there are still plenty of other old films we should be able to see. Recently the early Marx Brothers and vintage Sturges films have been resurrected: but what has happened to the Garbo's, to *Sous les toits de Paris*, to *Winterset*? . . . The list can be extended indefinitely.

As a move in this direction, SIGHT & SOUND is organising a ballot, the object of which is to secure the revival of a film the majority of readers would like to see again. The reader is asked, therefore, to send a postcard to the editor, bearing the title of the film he most urgently elects for reissue. When the film with most votes has been ascertained, the company or distributor concerned will be approached, and (subject to a copy being available) will be asked to screen it to the press. It is then up to the critics to rediscover it as a masterpiece and, we hope, for readers to have the pleasure of confirming that view.

The closing date for postcards is December 1st, and we hope to announce the results in the January issue of SIGHT & SOUND.

Above, left: Jean-Pierre Aumont, Jean-Paul Sartre. Right: Jacques Prevert and Picasso. Below, left: André Gide and Picasso

La Vie Commence Demain

Nicole Vedres showed us three years ago her very witty and successful "*Paris* 1900" and some interesting "scrap-book" films have been made in England, following a chronological pattern. The French have a slightly different technique in compiling old material, which was recently shown in "***Ce** Siecle a* 50 *ans*".

"*La Vie Commence Demain*", which Nicole Vedres has now completed, belongs to the same category, but instead of turning to the past, it tries to project the present into the future. It gives Jean Pierre Aumont the part of an enquiring young man who looks at our civilisation with his eyes wide open and interviews the foremost exponents of French cultural life. Jean-Paul Sartre, André Gide, Picasso, Jacques Prévert, Le Corbusier and many others appear in the film, casting a glimpse back at their achievements and trying to pierce the mystery of an uncertain future. The composer Darius Milhaud will not only take his turn on the screen, but will also be responsible for the music of the film.

FRANCIS KOVAL

A scene from Emmer's "Domenica d'Agosto"

LOCARNO FESTIVAL

Francis Koval

IN THE POST-WAR YEARS it has become almost a fashion for glamorous seaside resorts like Cannes and the Venice Lido to claim the right to have an International Film Festival, or rather—THE Film Festival—and even Brussels entered this fashionable competition some years ago. In the middle of all this bargaining, organising, treaty-signing—always entrusted to government departments—another Film Festival sprang up in 1946 almost unnoticed, and has flourished ever since. This was at Locarno.

There was no question of asking the Federal Government for help, or of competing with the Festivals already established. A few enterprising people like Camillo Beretta and Riccardo Bolla, genuinely interested in the cinema (and also in the welfare of their tourist-minded community, of course) simply got together and decided that interesting films from many countries could be obtained without recourse to "official channels" but by approaching the distributors directly. This method had the advantage that pictures could be discreetly picked (and rejected if need be) without giving offence to any official body. The fact that no jury was appointed, and no distribution of prizes contemplated, lightened the Festival of the usual ballast of intrigues, pressure groups and uneasy compromises.

And so it happened that the Locarno Festival has developed a style of its own. This year it re-united for the fifth time a small crowd of cinema people and specialised journalists in a pleasantly informal atmosphere, unequalled by any of the 'big" Festivals, where the individual often feels lost in the whirlpool of official (and often pompous) functions. Here, on the shores of the Lago Maggiore, the notabilities of the cinema were not surrounded by a bodyguard of publicity men and groomed for spectacular press conferences. Aldo Fabrizi, Guiseppe de Santis, Luciano Emmer, Gustav Froehlich, Jacques Sernas and many others mixed freely and submitted graciously to the ordeal of interrogation.

Last year the Festival Committee made an exception to the rule in arranging a prize award. This led to some unpleasant incidents and the experiment was abandoned. But the film critics present this year decided that they would meet informally on the last day and try to determine the best films of the Festival in a friendly discussion. The meeting became very animated and multi-lingual. It may be characteristic of the mood prevailing on the Continent at present that John Ford's *When Willie Comes Marching Home* pooled the largest number of votes. Closely followed *Stage Fright*, Luciano Emmer's *Domenica D'Agosto*, John Huston's *We Were Strangers*, *They Were Not Divided* and *Golden Salamander*. A French journalist summed up the results neatly in the headline: "Win for the Americans, Place for the British". Terence Young's story of the Guards Armoured Division aroused among the critics of all nationalities a far greater enthusiasm than it did in London at the time, and was even compared to *The Way Ahead*. *The Golden Salamander*, a favourite with the general public, was praised for its pictorial qualities, its direction and acting, objections being made, though, to the shortcomings of the script. As for *The Astonished*

"Le soif des hommes". Georges Marchal, Dany Robin

Heart, it was accepted as a competent piece of work, although criticised for its staginess.

To those interested in artistic progress, however, the showing of *Domenica D'Agosto* must have been the most startling event of the Festival, as it was the only work revealing a new approach to film-making and it had a genuinely fresh quality that compensated for its various shortcomings. The simple tale of some quite ordinary town-dwellers who spend a torrid August Sunday on the Ostia beach, Rome's equivalent of Coney Island, is told humorously and touchingly at the same time. Its "neo-realistic" style could be placed somewhere between *Four Steps in the Clouds* and *Bicycle Thieves*, but as a whole the picture does not reach the level of either. Luciano Emmer, a master of the documentary, has not yet completely found his own style in dealing with human events. He mars an otherwise excellent subject by introducing too many characters and by piling up too many overlapping human stories, which lack dramatic co-ordination. But he told me himself that the picture was made on a rather modest budget and the shooting script written in less than a fortnight, in collaboration with Sergio Amidei and Cesare Zavattini. Seen in this light *Domenica D'Agosto*, as a documentarist's first attempt at a feature film, deserves a prize for the most promising picture.

Something of the same kind of freshness so characteristic of many recent Italian films could also be found in Aldo Fabrizi's new picture *Benvenuto Reverendo*. The story of a convict disguised as a priest is reminiscent of *The Pilgrim*, but it is far from reaching its level. The high standard of acting by Aldo Fabrizi in the main part, Lianella Carell (the "wife" from *Bicycle Thieves*) as his partner, and all the supporting players, cannot conceal Fabrizi's lack of experience as a director. He fails to maintain unity of style, and the mixture of broad comedy, slapstick and social comedy is not satisfactory.

Among other Italian films shown, *Vent 'Anni* and *Cuori Sul Mare* proved to be average commercial productions, while *Il Mulatto* qualifies for a slightly higher class, mainly because of Francesco de Robertis' careful direction and the performances of Umberto Spadaro and Angelo, a remarkable half-caste child with fair hair.

The French participation was this time confined to only two films, because the "Semaine du Cinéma Français" at Knokke coincided with the Festival, and a similar event organised in March at Zurich had already brought to Switzerland the most outstanding films of the year. Attention was focused all the more, then, on the rather impressive picture *La Soif des Hommes* shot by Serge de Poligny's unit almost entirely on location in Algiers. It is a screen adaptation of Suzanne Pairault's novel *Le Sang de Bou Okba*. The not particularly original story of a French settler (Georges Marchal), his love for two very different sisters (Andrée Clément and Dany Robin) and his pathetic attempts to convert a piece of desert into a vineyard, is well told and achieves conviction through skilful direction and acting. But all this really serves only as a pretext for a pictorial description of the historical background: the 1848 period with its social unrest, its revolution and its cholera epidemics. The picture, excellently shot, has images of exotic beauty. Unfortunately the leisurely treatment of the subject makes for heaviness, and the continuity is somewhat disturbed by cutting imposed to reduce its almost epic length.

The greatest disappointment was caused by the German entries, all the more depressing as on other similar occasions one had fancied a certain renaissance of the German cinema. None of the three films sent in could serve as confirmation of that belief. The well-known pre-war actor Gustav Froehlich, now turned producer, personally presented his latest achievement, *Die Leuge* (*The Lie*), which proved to be a pompous agglomeration of the oldest clichés. Even first class actors like Otto Gebuhr (of *Frederick The Great*), Ewald Balser, Sibylle Schmitz and Cornell Borchers (greatly admired recently in *The Big Lift*) were powerless to instil any life into the story. One sympathised similarly with Marianne Hoppe and Hans Sohnker in their struggle against overwhelming odds in Fred Kirchhoff's *Nur Eine Nacht* (*Only One Night*), a picture in which cheap symbolism reaches its climax with the shot of two lighted cigarettes falling on the floor in unison and thus epitomising a passionate embrace. . . . A slightly superior sentimental comedy *Des Lebens Ueberfluss* (*Life's Plenty*), made by Wolfgang Liebeneiner, was not up to the standard either of his reputation or even his last year's film *Liebe* 47, but strangely enough it was applauded by the vast majority of our German-Swiss colleagues. The assurance of the Germans present that all these pictures would be a great commercial success in their native country gave us little reason to cheer.

On the other hand, a Chinese picture (fortunately subtitled in French) bearing the title *Ville Interdite* certainly held one's attention. Everybody was astonished to find that both technically, and in narrative treatment, the film conformed to the requirements of the Western world. Had this film been made in any European country we might have found much less to recommend in it. But the genuinely exotic settings, a distinctive style of acting and, not least, the subject matter itself, exercised a strong fascination on the European spectator. That is probably why we found this account of the events leading to the decadence and collapse of the Chinese dynasty in the 19th Century vivid and interesting, although they were seen only from the angle of the Imperial palace.

The documentary part of the Festival organised by Miss M. E. Kaehnert, a specialist of rare competence and thoroughness, deserves special mention, because Locarno never offers a medley of heterogeneous shorts chosen at random. On the

contrary; new documentaries are grouped thematically and presented at separate sessions. So this year there was one session devoted to UNESCO films, all of them concerned with human progress, another centred on the development of the cinema (with some interesting scraps of old silent films supplied by the Cinemateca Italiana), and a third concentrating on non-European countries which for one reason or another are in the centre of interest just now.

Two new documentaries at least, both of near-feature length and both made by Swiss explorers, are worth mentioning. One of them, *Dankalia*, was made by A. E. Wittlin on a 16 m.m. colour film (Kodachrome) and gives a vivid account of his journey into the borderland of eastern Abyssinia and Somaliland. The other was made by Hans Leuenberger, who a year ago set out single-handed to explore the life and customs of some African tribes on the southern border of Eritrea and Sudan. We saw only about 1,000 feet of the film he took there, sometimes at the risk of his life. But although it was a rough-cut with a quite inadequate sound-track, it left us all greatly impressed.

The organisers of the Locarno Festival, encouraged by the successes of past years, are planning for 1951 an event on a larger scale—perhaps even with Government support and an international jury. At the same time, however, they are determined to preserve the cordial atmosphere. They have already proved that this is not incompatible with a serious approach to the cinema.

The hero's return. Colleen Townsend, Evelyn Varden, Dan Dailey, William Demarest in "When Willie Comes Marching Home"

John Ford

In atmosphere not unlike a scene from one of his own westerns, this picture of the rarely interviewed, publicised and photographed John Ford (reproduced here by courtesy of *Flair*, whose photographer Karl Bissinger went down to Republic Studios for it) shows the master off-set during the making of his latest, *Rio Bravo*, with his friend and leading actor John Wayne. *Rio Bravo* is to be another western by this unequalled director of *Stagecoach*, *My Darling Clementine* and *She Wore a Yellow Ribbon*, whose vigour at 55 is quite undimmed.

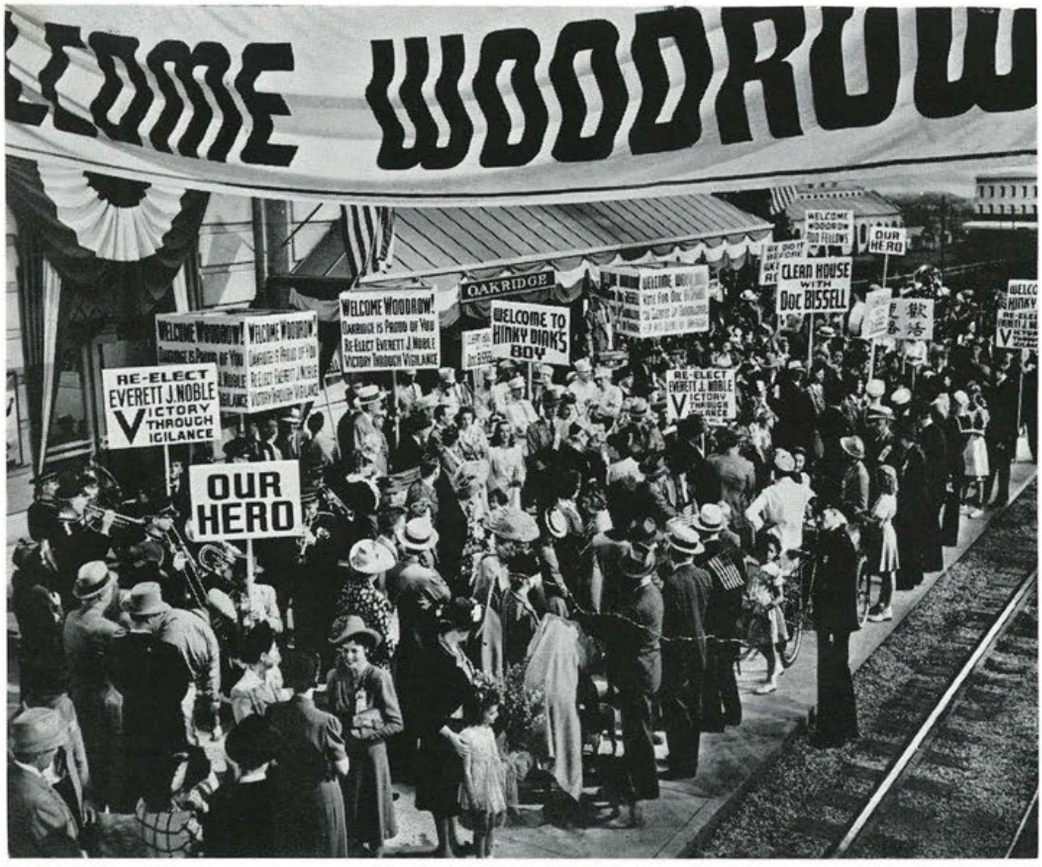
TWO DIRECTORS

John Huston

The director of *The Asphalt Jungle* is seen here with his father during the making of the film, a few weeks before the latter's death. Now a leading producer-director at M.G.M., Huston, one of the most brilliant film-makers of his generation, plans next to make *The Red Badge of Courage*.

MR. DEEDS AND WILLIE STARK

Penelope Houston



Small-town politics: "Hail the Conquering Hero"

THE FILMS OF A NATION may not always reflect that nation's mental climate; they do show what its people believe to be the truth about themselves and, most of all, their hopes and their fears. The artist who wishes to light up a corner of the national character must do it in a form that the audience will find acceptable; he must make the same assumptions, although he need not draw the same conclusions from them.

This is especially true of Hollywood in its serious mood. The artist in Hollywood must first satisfy the business man, and the business man has created his power out of a knowledge—soundly based on dollars and cents—of what the public wants, and of how much it is safe to give them. The cinema public will accept big business as a villain but it will not (or is not permitted to) accept Socialism as a solution; it will admit its own tolerance to Negroes, but it will not admit that tolerance could be extended to inter-marriage. Hollywood is often accused of shirking its responsibilities but, especially in recent years, it has made a number of films sociological or political in theme.

This is not a new trend; it was established in the 30's by such films as *Black Legion*, *Fury* and *They Won't Forget*. The makers of these and other films of the same period, as Richard Griffith wrote in *The Film Till Now* "conscientiously . . . set themselves the problem of dramatising public issues within the limits of what the box-office said was popular entertainment. The result was an extremely remarkable series of films which came closer to the American Scene as the majority had experienced it than films had done since the early days . . .". The social films of the 30's covered a variety of topics—lynching hysteria, strike problems, slum conditions, miscarriages of justice, gangsterdom—often with more ferocity (due perhaps to more recent memories of the depression and the accession of Roosevelt), than today. In this article, however, an attempt has been made to illustrate points with films fairly fresh in the public mind that have a bearing on the general temper of America today.

Hollywood makes certain basic assumptions in its picture of the national scene (some of which may seem strange to the outsider) and in these assumptions is a clue to the question of why films dealing with politics are made. They are: power corrupts (*Citizen Kane*, *All the King's Men*); career politicians are very probably dishonest (*Mr. Smith Goes to Washington*); local politics are dominated by crooks (*The Great McGinty*); big business plays at politics for its own dishonest interests (*State of the Union*). In view of these assumptions it is hardly surprising that the fundamental virtue of the good politician, as Hollywood shows him, is always simple honesty; a quality to be found, we are told, not in the big cities, but in the small towns. The ideal American political hero is Longfellow Deeds, overcoming big business by sheer integrity, believing that the will to do good must always conquer.

It is, perhaps, an over simplified view, but it is an understandable one. Hollywood grew to maturity during the twenties when big business was given a free hand during the do-nothing administrations of Harding and Coolidge. Political inertia was at least partly responsible for the crash which destroyed the average American's faith in the virtues of unbridled big business. Roosevelt and Truman embody some of the characteristics of the screen hero; the New Deal was, after all, as much the expression of an ideal as of a policy; hostility to Roosevelt came from just those big financial interests whom Hollywood castigates; support came from those whom Hollywood elevates, the little man who distrusts the cartels and the monopolies of the interests whom (since the slump) he has come to regard as his enemy. To look at America through the eyes of Hollywood is to see a reflection of recent history, and a picture, idealised or realistic, of what the average American wants and fears. In essence, two views of life are reflected: the intellectual and the simple, and although these are very different in origin they are curiously similar in result.

The first is the "unconfused liberalism" (as Thurber expresses it in *The Male Animal*) of the American intellectual. It is an attitude subject to various degrees of confusion and of liberalism. The American intellectual is deeply disturbed by the obvious abuses of American society; he feels for the underdog, he is tolerant, bitter and realistic, but beneath the hard surface he is very probably an idealist. His view of life has reached the screen in a surprising number of films. On the level of pure cynicism, there is the Marx Brothers' *Duck Soup*, the most ruthless exposure of the whole ridiculous political business, and there is Chaplin in his serious mood, notably in *Monsieur Verdoux*, showing the fate of one man who rebels against the murderous pattern of human society in his own private outburst of mass murder. Sturges narrows his cynicism to the American scene; in *The Great McGinty* he tells the story of a man who votes 37 times for a political boss; in *Hail the Conquering Hero* he shows up the pettiness and dishonesty of small town politics—his simple minded hero is eventually given the office of mayor as a tribute to his honesty, but whether Sturges here bows to the conventional viewpoint, or intends yet another joke at the expense of small town officials, he does not say.

The seaminess of local corruption is revealed in passing in such a film as *The Glass Key*, a thriller from a Dashiell Hammett novel which gives a ruthless picture of the activities of a political gangster. *All the King's Men* attempts a detailed study of the effects of large scale corruption. In Robert Rossen's adaptation of Robert Penn Warren's novel, an essentially honest man of high ideals finds that the way to power lies through dishonesty and chicanery, and that these demand their own price. Willie Stark, the gangster governor, becomes an enemy to his people; his only opponents are old, tired politicians who have themselves practised the smaller corruptions. Honesty belongs to another world, but it is implicit in the film that honesty is political virtue.

The reverse side of the same picture is shown in the second point of view, whose greatest exponent is Frank Capra. His films, which stem from the thirties, reflect the fundamental outlook of the "average American". He admires and believes in the little man; he would like to believe that the meek will indeed inherit the earth; in a world dominated by power politics and big business he still finds refuge in idealism. The idealism, however, does not ignore the realities: Capra is always careful to build up a towering structure of dishonesty before he allows his hero to advance against it and knock it down, like the walls of Jericho, with his trumpet call.

The pattern is familiar. We see corruption at work; we see

Oppressors and oppressed. Left, political bosses (Adolphe Menjou with telephone) in "State of the Union" Right, the Joad family (Jane Darwell, Henry Fonda) in "The Grapes of Wrath"

Three eras of Soviet Russia in the American cinema. Top, amicable satire: Garbo in "Ninotchka", 1940. Centre, patriotic tribute: "Song of Russia", 1944. Below, post-war condemnation: Dana Andrews in "The Iron Curtain"

the little man apparently its victim and then, dramatically, we see that if the hero can once reach the ear of the public he will find in them his support. In *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington*, boy-scout virtues overcome the corrupt senator and the villainous business men. In *Mr. Deeds Goes to Town*, the hero propounds what seems to be Capra's own solution—a sort of co-operative private enterprise; he is apparently defeated, but once the case comes into the open, the whole of society is on his side. *State of the Union* (known in Britain as *The World and his Wife*) had a cutting satirical edge which spared no party; it mentioned actual politicians by name; it created a detailed picture of the methods of political bosses. The hero, a business man built up as a presidential candidate by politicians who want to make use of him, first yields to their promises, believing that if he reaches the White House by dishonest means he can still do good once power is achieved. His realization that the means do not justify the end, his exposure of the interests which have cheated him and the people, is the film's denouement. A completely trivial comedy with a hint of Capraism, *The Farmer's Daughter* similarly exalts simplicity when the Swedish country servant girl arrives in the Senate.

Both the points of view briefly described have much common ground. Both accept corruption; the one as a state of affairs from which there is no escape; the other as an enemy which can be destroyed. The opponents of Willie Stark and the opponents of Mr. Deeds belong to the same class; Mr. Deeds' victory is a triumph, Willie Stark's points the way to the still greater dangers of Fascism. It is obvious —heightened by the course of recent American political history—that these films both reflect the American state of mind, and answer a need in the national consciousness: it is important to face the facts, and to be reassured that their implications are less disastrous than they appear.

This same tendency to give the public what it wants and expects is very strong in those American films which deal with foreign affairs. Hollywood's attitude to foreign politics has been analysed at length by Dr. Siegfried Kracauer (in an article reprinted the Penguin *Cinema*, 1950). Here it is only necessary to say that the Hollywood approach has usually been a cautious reflection of the state of mind of the American people, if not always of the official State Department policy. *Blockade*, for instance (although careful to identify neither side by name), advocated the cause of the Spanish loyalists at a time when American unofficial sympathy for them, and distrust of Fascism, was strong. On the eve of the second World War, *Confessions of a Nazi Spy* gave a bold account of a threat that struck home—Nazi activities inside America. During the war, Hollywood's motives were simple; from *Mrs. Miniver* to *Song of Russia* the virtues of America's allies were exalted, while her enemies were systematically blackened. Communism, before the war an external menace, was then treated as a joke; comedies such as *Ninotchka* and *He Stayed for Breakfast* had shown the Communist converted by love to the cause of free enterprise. Since the war, Communism has become an enemy within the state, and no subject for humour; the propaganda of *The Iron Curtain* (dealing with the Canadian spy trials) was solemn, portentous, unrelieved; the Russians were brutal and ruthless; the Communist was converted by the superior virtues of the free way of life, as typified by his next door neighbour. In foreign policy, as even these few examples show, it is always necessary to tread carefully. Black and white are too clearly defined in the national consciousness for much shading of tone to be permissible. It is this which makes possible the production of

such an irresponsible film as *The Enemy Within*, which exploits the national fear of Communism, but which does no service to its own cause by presenting the enemy as at once brutal and neurotic, sinister and half-witted.

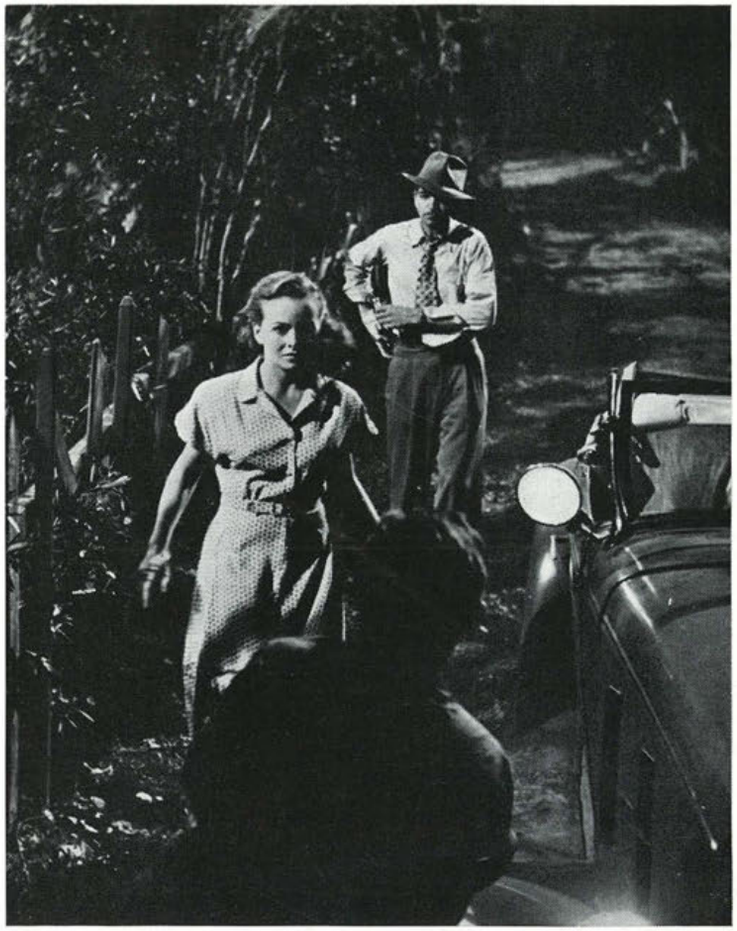
In its picture of the state of the Union, and of the outside world, Hollywood echoes the thoughts and hopes of its audience. It might seem that in its sociological pictures, notably in the recent Jewish and Negro cycles, the approach was different. These films are propaganda tempered by entertainment; there is no denying the courageous intention and genuine sincerity of their makers. They have shown the tortured violence of the Jew- or Negro-hater (*Crossfire*, *No Way Out*); the reactions of a small town to the discovery that their trusted, apparently white doctor had Negro blood (*Lost Boundaries*); the confused anti-Semitism lurking in the minds of those who pride themselves on tolerance (*Gentleman's Agreement*). They have brought into the open the ugly conflicts beneath the surface of America, and the fact that the most conservative stronghold in America is prepared to make such films, and to allow them to be shown abroad, is the greatest possible tribute to the strength of a country which has never been ashamed to show its faults.

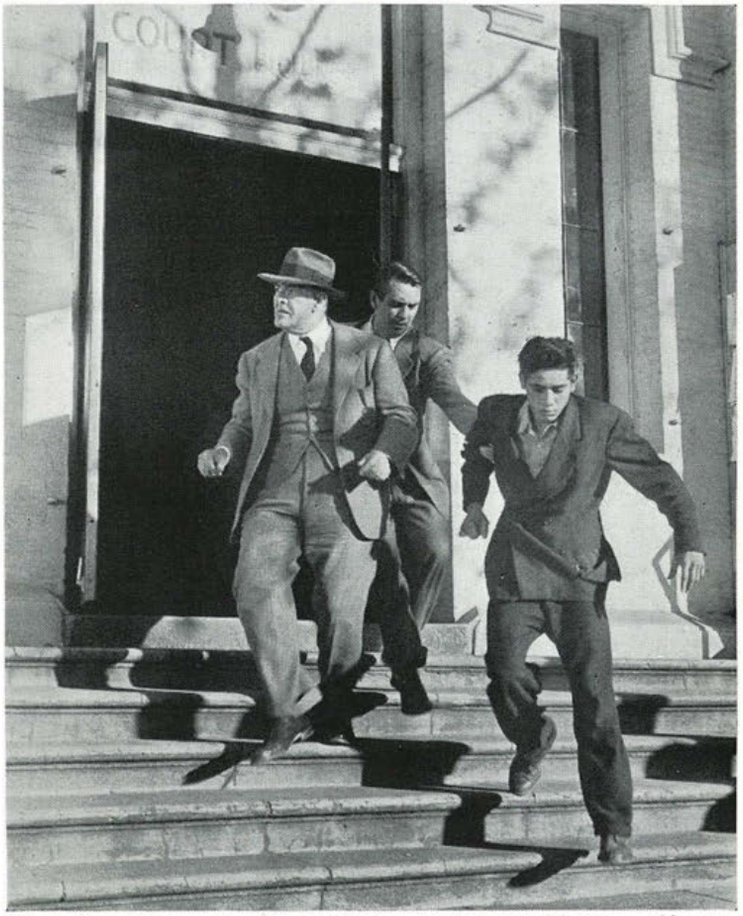
But these films are made by business men as well as by social reformers; the major concern is to entertain, and for this reason while presenting a problem they must also show its solution. The man half mad with race hatred is destroyed by society; the small town accepts its Negro doctor, congratulating itself on its charity; in *Pinky* it is made clear that the place of a trained Negro is with his own people, rather than in the hazards of a mixed community—the final shot of this picture, indeed, was a betrayal of the rest of the film. How much this type of betrayal vitiates the picture's message it is difficult to say, since the effect of the films on American audiences cannot be gauged. Moss Hart (who scripted *Gentleman's Agreement*) is said to have had an encounter which is at least significant. A minor technician working on the picture told him afterwards that being associated with such a film had made a deep impression on him; when the gratified writer asked for details he said, "I'll be more careful in future; I won't ever ill-treat a Jew in case it turns out that he's really a Christian".

A happy ending is almost *de rigeur* in the sociological film. An exception is John Ford's *The Grapes of Wrath*. This, although primarily an exploration of the human spirit in adversity, showed the problem of the Dust Bowl in all its tragic implications. It was a memorable and deeply courageous film, which arrived at no artificial solution, but it is important to remember that it had its origins in John Steinbeck's best-selling novel; its producers could be sure that they had a ready made audience—would they have made the film without that assurance?

Apart from such a rare exception, it seems clear that in making sociological pictures Hollywood has the needs of its audience very clearly in mind: just as in a Capra film we are assured that right will triumph, so in a racial discrimination picture we are presented with the facts, and these are then twisted (in varying degrees) to provide a solution for the screen. It is courageous to proclaim that America has its oppressed classes, but it is not essentially controversial: there will always be a happy ending. In the same way, even Willie Stark is not allowed to continue in triumph, his death (however adventitious) gives their chance to those who have learnt their political lesson from his life.

(*Continued on page* 285.)





The American cinema reflects racial problems. Above, Jeanne Crain in "Pinky". Below, Macdonald Carey and Lalo Rios in "The Dividing Line"

30 years of realism. Top, Britain: Hepworth's "The Bottle", 1915. Centre, U.S.A.: Milestone's "All Quiet on the Western Front", 1930. Below, Italy: Rossellini's "Paisa", 1946

30 YEARS OF CONSCIOUS REALISM

Charles Ford

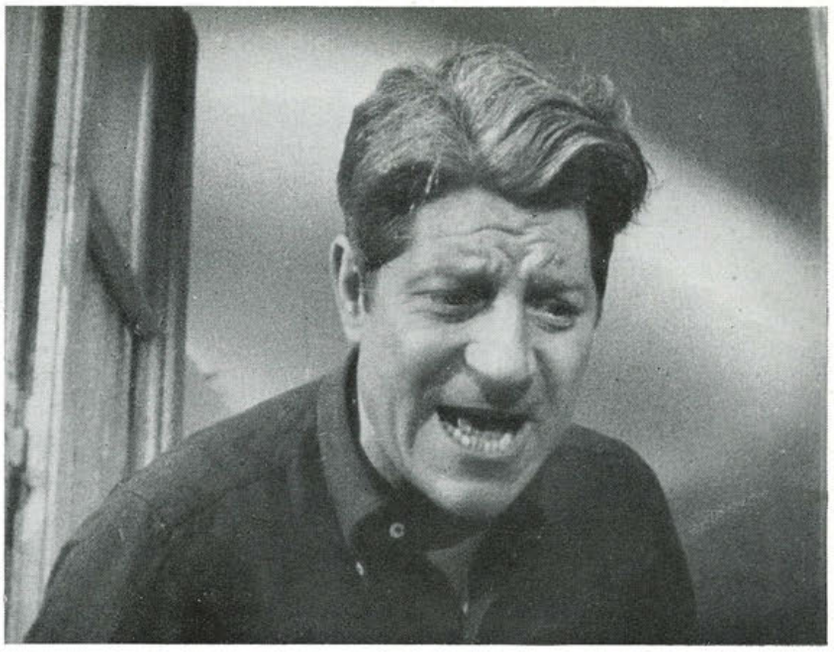
THE FIRST DRAMATIC FILM ever made, in the true sense of the word dramatic, was a comedy—and a realistic comedy: Louis Lumière's *L'Arroseur arrosé*. That much is undeniable. Today we would call the first films made by the Lumière brothers "documentaries", and *L'Arroseur arrosé* was in fact destined to lead the cinema—still at that time known as "cinematography"—in new and unforeseen directions. Louis Lumière's first sketch contains all the elements of a dramatic work: exposition, surprise, denouement. The little anecdote was realistic, taken from everyday life. The fact that *L'Arroseur arrosé* was a comic sketch is not important: what matters is that this film constituted the first sign for the cinema of its artistic possibilities. At that time the cinema was less than a year old, and already it had started along the two lines on which it would continue to progress: the lines of documentary and of fiction.

Fiction itself, which soon enough was going completely to submerge the documentary element in film-making, began in its turn to reveal two distinct (one might almost say hostile) tendencies: realism and fantasy. To begin with, there had only been realism. A product of theatre and photography, the cinema was bound to be used to reproduce real life as faithfully as possible—within the limits of some quickly established conventions. George Melies was the first to react against this earthbound use of the new medium, but it is no exaggeration to say that Melies, in spite of a few uninspired imitators, remained a pioneer without followers, an almost unique artist.

During these years, then, the cinema was the prey of manufacturers of realism. More and more films imitated real life, their writers and makers increasingly thought of pleasing the public. In France, Ferdinand Zecca made *Histoire d'un Crime*, and then Louis Feuillade undertook a whole series of little dramas under the generic title of *La Vie telle qu'elle est:* in England, James Williamson had already made two series of films which he presented as *A Bit of Real Life*, or *A Story of Humble Life*. In America, Stuart Blackton made a series known as *Scenes of Real Life*, and in all the world's studios—in Italy, Germany, Denmark, and pre-revolutionary Russia—these "slice of life" films multiplied. Sometimes, a timid follower of Melies such as G. A. Smith in Britain or Gaston Velle in Italy tried to bring the fantastic and the imaginary back to the studios, but their efforts were lost beneath an avalanche of films based on the most conventional realism.

For a quarter of a century, from the invention of the cinema until 1920, directors everywhere made realistic films; and one might compare these directors to Molière's *Bougeois*

Gentilhomme, who learnt with astonishment at the age of fifty that he spoke in prose. These film makers were realists, but unconscious realists. They were hardly concerned to know to what theory of art they might be devoting themselves. A few who were beginning to understand the importance of the new art probed more deeply into abstract problems of a visual aesthetic, of rhythm. Film makers had to become conscious of their art before they could appreciate the dualism of expression which marks the history of the cinema as much as that of literature or the other arts. The art of the cinema reached its maturity just after the first world war. Various factors were responsible for bringing the cinema to the fulness of its artistic powers: the healthy vitality of the American westerns and the burlesque school of Mack Sennett and Chaplin; the fireworks of Abel Gance and the French *avant-garde*, the incomparable poetry of the Swedish school, the irresistibly dynamic Soviet group, and the German expressionists. Of these precious landmarks, the expressionist revolution, let loose in 1920 by Robert Wiene with *Dr. Caligari*, is the one which interests us most today, because it is through the reaction against this revolutionary movement that conscious realism arose.



Jean Gabin in "Le jour se lève"

On the aesthetic level, expressionism in the cinema was a pictorial method; on the level of theory, it came as a reaction against the excessive commercialisation of the German cinema during and immediately after the war. A reaction against unconscious realism, expressionism brought back into the cinema the fantastic element it had lacked since the time of Melies; it moved writers to write directly for the cinema, it introduced painters and architects into the studios. "Caligarism" operated on a plane of fantasy and unreality, taking up a principle curiously forecast by Prosper Merimée when he wrote in 1851 (of Gogol): "Begin by depicting strange but not impossible characters, but make your treatment of them realistic in detail. The transition from the strange to the fantastic will be imperceptible, and the reader will find himself in the realms of fantasy before he has realised that the actual world has been left far behind him".

Robert Wiene and his followers had succeeded in creating a new aesthetic: but there is no reaction which does not provoke a counter-reaction. The fact that expressionism could never become the daily bread of the cinema (Wiene never imagined that it could) made it all the more violent. Realism did not lose its followers, it even acquired new ones. No less obstinate than the upholders of "Caligarism", they sought to prove that they were the sole possessors of artistic truth. This was how unconscious realism, which had dominated film making before 1919, became a conscious and organised realism. Since that time, directors who make realistic films *know* that they are making realistic films.

Evidently, realism covers a wide field. There are several methods, as distinct from each other as, for instance, the work of Pabst, of Carné, of Eisenstein, or of Carol Reed. I will not embark here on a detailed study of the subtly different forms of realism or naturalism. What is important is that for the last thirty years, the reaction provoked by German expressionism has established itself in the cinema all over the world. Realism, naturally, differs in degree and quality. One of the greatest defenders of the realistic doctrine in literature, Emile Zola, gave a definition of art which no one has ever succeeded in bettering: "*L'Art, c'est la Nature vue à travers un temperament*". In the cinema, the balance of the elements implied in this definition is sometimes uneven. When the creative mind is too weak, Nature takes the upper hand and Art withdraws: this happens too often, unfortunately, in the films of the so-called neo-realist school.

But first of all one has to ask whether there is really a neo-realist school in Italy. The question may seem strange in view of the fact that this school has provoked a great deal of discussion in the last three or four years. It is, however, permissible to doubt its real existence. While no one would attempt to deny the evidence—that is, to question the value of a number of Italian films placed in this category—it seems to me that the formula is scarcely new, and that these films could easily belong to one of the numerous divisions of realism which have been in existence during the last thirty years of the cinema. Can one conclude, moreover, that an American neo-realist school exists simply on the evidence of such films as *The Naked City* or *Call Northside* 777? Last year at Locarno I had a conversation with the director Alberto Lattuada, one of the most attractive personalities of the young Italian cinema, whose film *Il Mulino del Po* was being shown there. He told me: "I quite agree with you. Realistic films are being made in Italy, and sometimes these films are masterpieces, but one cannot properly speak of a neo-realist school. This pseudo-school is to a great extent the result of a snobbery which has led our younger film makers into making mistakes: they imagine it is enough to photograph a chamber-pot to be applying neo-realism . . .".

The idea of neo-realism has in fact been invented to categorise the work of Italian directors who have "gone out into the streets". Aesthetically, they only reproduce what a number of their predecessors have already done, and, to return to Zola's definition, Nature in post-war Italian films often plays a greater part than Temperament. Claude Autant-Lara offers a purely technical and material explanation of this phenomenon. It is not, according to the director of *Le Diable au Corps*, the result of theory or doctrine. "The style of the Italian cinema", he writes, "is due to the complicated working conditions that have resulted from poverty of

Dmytryk's "Crossfire". Robert Ryan

technical means. Italian film-makers, struggling against severe difficulties—mediocre studio conditions, and very limited financial resources, to mention only two—have been led to content themselves with filming the life going on around them. Certainly there is a style there, and it sees itself creating a school".

The problem, then, is still unresolved. When, about 1912, Louis Feuillade placed his characters in *Fantomas* in the midst of the wine-casks of the Halle aux Vins, was this not literally neo-realism? And Louis Delluc, too, advised film makers: "Take a walk, look about you: the streets, the subways, the tramways, the shops are all full of a thousand dramas, a thousand original comedies to test your talent, you men of talent!" In truth, there is nothing new under the arc lights. For more than fifty years, films of fiction have divided themselves into two distinct categories: those which deal with real life, and those which devote themselves to the fantastic. And, since *Caligari*, we have been aware of this.

(Translated from the French by the Editors.)

★ *The Seventh Art* ★

One of the worst bits of publicity timing in the annals of Hollywood planting was that engineered by M.G.M. studio when Lana Turner's forthcoming blessed event was announced. Virtually all the correspondents were in Las Vegas at the time attending Paramount's world premiere of *My Friend Irma Goes West*. And, on top of that, papers throughout the country were eating up great hunks of space on the launching of Korean activities. (*Sheila Graham, Washington Star.*)

★

"If he wants to study Betty Grable or Lana Turner, he should do as I do—go to the local cinema and pay his 1s. 9d., said Councillor H. H. Barber to Southport Town Council when he opposed a proposal that a local teacher should attend a film appreciation course at Bangor at the rate-payers' expense. (Report in *The Cinema.*)

★

Eleanor Parker, a convict in Warner Brothers' prison drama *Caged*, has been named "Mother of the Year" by the Society of American Florists. Patricia Neal, Warner Brothers star, has been named "Miss Dreamboat of 1950" by Mississippi river skippers at their annual convention. (*Publicity handout.*)

★

H. Potts, house manager of the New Victoria, Bradford, tied up *The Body Said No* and *Lost Boundaries* programme with the test matches. The credit cards read: "In Australia years ago 'The Body said No' to bodyline bowling, and 'Lost Boundaries'. In Bradford next week 'The Body said No' and 'Lost Boundaries' will be at the New Victoria ' (*Kinematograph Weekly.*)

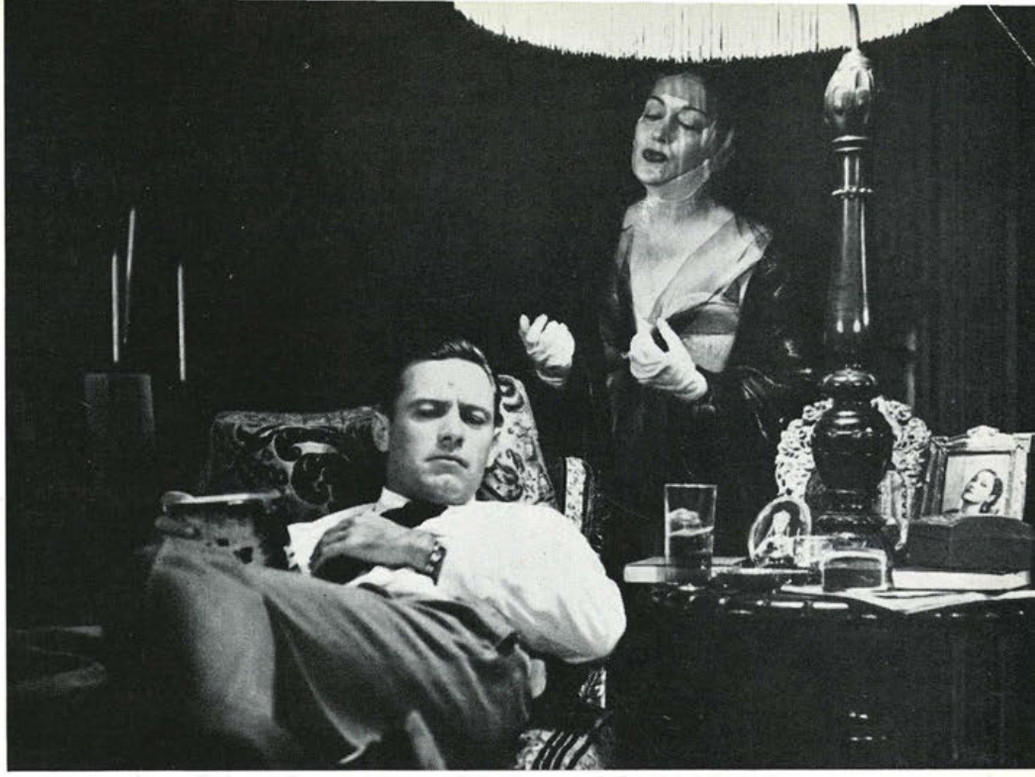
★

He (Errol Flynn) and the 21-year-old princess met in Paris and were drawn together, he says, by a common love of snails with garlic sauce . . . "Then I realised she was the greatest girl I had ever known. And she doesn't know any lawyers". (Report in *The Daily Express.*)

Films of the Month

SUNSET BOULEVARD

James Agee



William Holden and Gloria Swanson

CHARLES BRACKETT AND BILLY WILDER have a long and honorable record in bucking tradition, breaking rules, and taking risks, according to their lights, and limits. Nobody thought they could get away with *Double Indemnity*, but they did; nobody thought they could get away with *The Lost Weekend*, but they did; apparently nobody thought they could get away with *Sunset Boulevard*, but they did; and now, one gathers, the industry is proud of them. There are plenty of good reasons why *Sunset Boulevard* (a beautiful title) is, I think, their best movie yet. It is Hollywood craftsmanship at its smartest and at just about its best, and it is hard to find better craftsmanship than that, at this time, in any art or country.

It is also, in terms of movie tradition, a very courageous picture. A sexual affair between a rich woman of fifty and a kept man half her age is not exactly a usual version of boy meets girl; nor is it customary for the hero and his best friend's fiancée to fall in love and like it; nor, as a rule, is a movie hero so weak and so morally imperfect that he can less properly be called a "Hero" than an authentic, unlucky and unadmirable human being. "Unhappy endings" are not so rare, by now, but it is rare to find one as skilful, spectacular and appropriate as this one. Besides all that, *Sunset Boulevard* is much the most ambitious movie about Hollywood ever done, and is the best of several good ones into the bargain.

It is unlikely that any living men know Hollywood better than Brackett and Wilder; most of their portrait is brilliantly witty and evocative, and much of it is also very sharp. It seems to me, however, that this is essentially a picture-maker's picture. I very much enjoy and respect it, but it seems significant to me that among other interested amateurs there is a wide difference of reaction, ranging from moderate liking or disappointment all the way to boredom, intense dislike, or even contempt. Judging by that it is hard to imagine that it will do very well before the general audience, interesting and exciting as it is, unless through some miracle of ballyhoo. I suspect that its main weakness as popular art lies not so much in unconventionalities of story or character, as in its coldness. And if it falls short of greatness—and in my opinion it does—I suspect that coldness, again, is mainly responsible. However that may be, I am willing to bet that it will be looked at and respected long after most of the movies too easily called great —not to mention the "heartwarmers"—have been sat through and forgotten. However that may be, it is certainly something for anyone interested in movies to see here and now. It may not be all it might have been, but it is completely faithful to its own set, intelligent terms and, within those terms, all but perfect.

A moderately corrupt script-writer (William Holden), down on his luck and in flight from trouble, dodges his car into a chance driveway and into a world as strange and obsolete as that of ancient Peru: a home and grounds which are Hollywood of the mid-twenties in extremis, now in irremediable decay. The chatelaine is a great ex-star (Gloria Swanson). Half mad, suicidal, with the obsessed narçistic arrogance of the once adored and long forgotten, for years she has been working on the awful script in which she plans her return to glory. Her only companion, her servant (Eric von Stroheim), was once a director as brilliant in his way as she, and was her first husband; he devotes his wrecked life to mending the leaks in her delusions. In part because of his need for a hideout, but fully as much because he is bewitched by curiosity, incredulity and a gradual crystallization of awe and pity, the writer stays on in this hermetic world, as script-doctor, as half-imprisoned house-guest, ultimately as gigolo. He watches, while the woman is deluded into the belief that her return to the screen is only a matter of weeks; he watches while she uses every art and science available to Hollywood in her effort to turn fifty years into a camera-proof twenty-five; he watches while she sinks her talons and her desperate needs so deeply into him that escape, or the mere truth, without tragedy, becomes inconceivable. Meanwhile he carries on as best he may his effort to write a script of his own, with his best friend's girl (Nancy Olson); another love affair develops. The whole business culminates, inevitably, in a head-on collision between illusion and reality and between the old

The visit to the studio: Gloria Swanson, Cecil B. de Mille

Crime passionnel: Erich von Stroheim, Gloria Swanson

Dreams of a come-back: von Stroheim, Gloria Swanson

Hollywood and the new; and in staring madness, and violent death.

There is no use pretending to discuss all the virtues, or even all the limitations, of this picture: it is one of those rare movies which are so full of exactness, cleverness, mastery, pleasure, and arguable and unarguable choice and judgment, that they can be talked about, almost shot for shot and line for line for hours on end. The people of the present and their world are handled with a grimly controlled, mock-easy exactness which seems about as good as a certain kind of modified movie naturalism can get; this exactness is also imposed on the obsoletes and their world, but within that exactness they are treated always, with fine imaginativeness and eloquence, as heroic grotesques. Mr. Holden and his girl and their friend (Jack Webb), not to mention Fred Clark acting a producer, are microscopically right in casting, direction and performance. Miss Swanson, required to play a hundred per cent grotesque, plays it not just to the hilt but right up to the armpit, by which I mean magnificently. Mr. von Stroheim, with the one thoroughly sympathetic role, takes every advantage of that which is permissible to an artist's honour, and is probably the best single thing in the show. Miss Swanson's lonely New Year's Eve party, and the loud, happy little party to which Mr. Holden escapes, are two of dozens of smashing proofs of mastery in conveying, and evoking the living and the posthumous Hollywood.

Much of the detail is marvellously effective and clever; Miss Swanson watching her young face in an old movie and standing up into the murderous glare of the projector to cry: "They don't make faces like that any more!" (they certainly don't and it is our loss); or the lighted swimming pool, so nicely calculated for the ultimate catastrophe. Sometimes the picture is a shade too clever for its own good: von Stroheim playing Bach on the organ, with gloves on, is wonderful in a way but possibly too weird, even for the context; and now and then a camera set-up or a bit of business or a line is so over-calculated, so obviously cherished, that it goes a little sour, much as the same thing can happen in prose which has gone rigid with overtraining. Yet one of the oddest and most calculated moments in the picture is also one of the best: the lingering, silent, terribly close close-up in which a soft, sleek clerk whispers to the slightly nauseated kept man: "After all, if the lady is paying . . ." The intense physical and spiritual malaise of the young man's whole predicament is registered, through this brilliantly indirect shot, as it can never be, even in so bravely intransigent a movie, in a scene between him and Miss Swanson; and the clerk (and his casting) are as much to be thanked for that, as the man who conceived the shot.

Movies about Hollywood have always been better

than novels about Hollywood (barring only Nathanael West's) because they are made by people who know the world and the medium they are talking about instead of by people who don't, and who have dropped in only to visit, hack or, in their opinion, slum. But almost inevitably, the view from inside is also limited. The manner of telling the story is apt to be gimmicky or too full of mere "effectiveness" because that is apt to become a habit with nearly anyone who works in movies for long. Superficially, the self-examination and self-criticism are often a lot of fun and sometimes amount to more than that, but essentially they are apt to be easygoing or even complacent, because that seems nearly always to happen to those who work in movies long enough to know their business really well. (Literary standards, to be sure, are as seldom higher; but literary men who write about Hollywood seldom know—or care—how little they know, and perhaps accordingly, feel all the better qualified as annihilative critics.) It seems to me that the makers of *Sunset Boulevard* are at times too gimmicky, contriving, and "effective"; on self criticism I am confused, as perhaps they are.

Largely through what is done with Miss Swanson, the silent era, and art, are granted a kind of barbarous grandeur and intensity, but the inference seems to be that they are also a good deal hammier than they actually were at their best. Further inference appears to be that the movies have come a long way since then. In many ways they have; in many other and important ways, this is open to argument and no such argument appears in this picture. On the other hand a great deal of truthfulness is achieved virtually without pointing or comment, by the people themselves. The lost people are given splendour, recklessness, an aura of awe; the contemporaries by comparison, are small, smart, safe-playing, incapable of any kind of grandeur, good or bad; and those who think they can improve or redeem the movies are largely just a bunch of what Producer Fred Clark aptly calls Message Kids, and compares with the New York critics. This is certainly a harsh picture of Hollywood; too harsh, considering some of the people who work there. By still quieter inference, of course, Hollywood is still essentially all right because it can produce such a picture as *Sunset Boulevard*; and with that, the considerable distance it goes, one is bound to agree.

Various observers have objected that the picture is "lifeless"; that the characters are unsympathetic; that neither tragedy implicit in the story—that of the obsolete artist, or that of the obsolete woman—is sufficiently developed, or explored, or is even risen to. Some of this seems to me true, some I disagree with; most of it, I think, comes from a temperamental unwillingness to accept Messrs. Brackett and Wilder as the kind of artists they happen to be. They are evidently much more concerned to make a character interesting, than sympathetic, and the interest itself is limited by the quality of their insight, which is intelligent and exceedingly clever, rather than profound. But the interest is real, and so far as I was concerned, sympathy developed accordingly; moreover, I am deeply grateful to artists who never try to cheat, coerce or seduce me into sympathy, and such artists are particularly rare in movies. On the charge of lifelessness I can only say that in my opinion there are two main kinds of life in art, not just one. The warmer, richer kind comes, invariably, from the kind of artist who works from far inside himself and his creatures. For the other kind, we can thank the good observer. Brackett and Wilder apparently have little if any gift for working from inside, but they are first rate observers, and their films are full of that kind of life. It is true, I think, that they fail to make much of the powerful tragic possibilities which are inherent in their story; they don't even explore much of the deep anguish and pathos which are still more richly inherent, though they often reveal it, quickly and brilliantly. But this does not seem to me a shameful kind of failure, if indeed it is proper to call it a failure at all: they are simply not the men for such a job, nor was this the kind of job they were trying to do. But they are beautifully equipped to do the cold, exact, adroit, sardonic job they have done; and artists who, consciously or unconsciously, learn to be true to their limitations as well as to their gifts, deserve a kind of gratitude and respect they much too seldom get.

(MR. DEEDS and WILLIE STARK *continued from page* 279).

Hollywood, in other words, acts both as the national conscience (Willie Stark) and as the national comforter (Mr. Deeds). To solve the problems of society, at a personal level and on the screen, is to suggest the possibility of a national solution, and so—in accordance with the first rule of showmanship—to send the audience home happy. This presenting of a true picture, and twisting it to arrive at a happy ending, is an ingenious way of having your cake and eating it—perhaps a failing to which Americans are slightly more prone than other nationalities. It corresponds to the mood of so much contemporary American literature, which seems to stress to an extraordinary degree the guilt felt by those who take handsome salaries for work of which they cannot help feeling ashamed.

But those who criticize Hollywood should remember, even though in the last analysis their criticism is usually justified, both the circumstances in which film-makers work, and the audience for which they work. The public can no more stare long at the truth than they can stare at the sun. Hollywood may prefer the smoked glasses and the cloudy obscurations but, to give credit where it is due, we *are* sometimes compelled to look for a moment at the sun.

A location from "The Wooden Horse". Anthony Steel

Writer and Director :
THE WOODEN HORSE and THE ASPHALT JUNGLE

Gavin Lambert

IN VIEW OF THE PRESENT WRITER and director controversy, which is shortly to extend beyond the pages of this magazine, this should be an apt moment to discuss two more recent films, *The Wooden Horse* and *The Asphalt Jungle*. The British film is directed by Jack Lee, from Eric Williams' screenplay of his own story: the American film, directed by John Huston, is also adapted by him in collaboration with Ben Maddow (who scripted *Intruder in the Dust*). Conditions apparently did not allow Jack Lee to write, or even participate in, the script of *The Wooden Horse*, and the result is that the virtues as well as the defects of this film are predominantly impersonal. *The Asphalt Jungle* is not without weaknesses, but even when it falters it is clearly the outcome of a centralised creative process, and has a firm personal style. Huston is undoubtedly a more experienced director than Jack Lee, but this is not an end of the matter.

The book of *The Wooden Horse* told a remarkable and exciting story, and it held one through its obviously first-hand narration; its writing, though, was not skilful, and did not suggest that the author had mastered the technique of fiction. The characterisation was one-dimensional, the dialogue somewhat monotonous, and while the fascination of its story made it a natural choice for filming, it should have been clear from the start that on the screen the material would need considerable re-shaping, a firmer structure and a more dramatic style. In this connection, a rather strange argument which occurred when *The Wooden Horse* was discussed on the B.B.C. programme "The Critics" must be noted. All but one member of the troupe considered that as this was a true story, one could not criticise any shortcomings in characterisation or structure that the film might have had. The fifth member, Roger Manvell, had cautiously remarked that the characterisation was "under-stated", though he added that this had not seriously affected his enjoyment of the film. The attitude this provoked, that story-telling must always yield to the demands of actuality—the implication being that transposition of the facts to the level of imaginative fiction would have been a betrayal—can only spring from a failure to appreciate the cinema as a dramatic, expressive art. *The Grapes of Wrath*, after all, is a "true" story: the fact that a character called Tom Joad did not actually exist does not make it any less true. There are two ways of filming an actual event, both in the case of *The Grapes of Wrath* and *The Wooden Horse* (which its author describes, anyway, as a novel). One is a documentary reconstruction, employing a real dustbowl family or the actual prisoners who escaped from Stalag Luft III: the other is a dramatic representation of the subject, which is of course less factual—but fact is not the only kind of truth. The existence of a script in the form of dramatic narrative, the use of professional actors, commits writer and director to an imaginative retelling of the story. In the sense implied by "The Critics", the film in fact is not "true": some of it was shot in a studio, and Leo Genn is not Eric Williams.

Not surprisingly, the limitations of Mr. Williams as a story-teller are again apparent in his script. Dramatically, the story presents a serious difficulty: the first half, culminating in the escape from the camp itself, is so obviously more striking than the second, which recounts how the two men evade the German military and escape to Sweden. The way to overcome this difficulty would probably have been to compress the action of the second half, to give it as much pace as possible, to explore deeper the relationship of the two men in this situation, and then cap it with the admirable ironic ending of the book. The script, however, spends as much time on the second half as on the first, following the adventures of the two men in painstaking detail, with unvarying emphasis, and ends with a limp scene in a hotel in Sweden. Nor does it penetrate any deeper into the relations between the two men, which must surely have increased in tension during that time. There is a half-hearted attempt to work up a sudden outbreak of irritation and panic between them, but it is damped down almost as soon as it has begun. Another incident that would have supported acute observation is the two men's temporary refuge in the Copenhagen flat of a frightened Danish girl, and once again the tension and strangeness of this encounter is not communicated. In the first half, the narrative is strong enough to carry itself, though a really vivid evocation of the atmosphere of prison camp life is not achieved.

These defects, then, are inherent in the film before its director takes over: he is faced with a script lacking in depth and structure, with a progression already set—to say nothing of a miscast leading actor. Under these circumstances, there

are few directors who could make such a film really their own. In this case, craftsmanship apart, the virtues that emerge are incidental: a definite human response where the material encourages it—the interrogation scene between the French worker (a real personality in the performance of Jacques Brunius), and the sympathetic handling of actors faced with the difficult task of creating character where it scarcely exists. This is notable especially in the case of Bryan Forbes, to a lesser extent with David Tomlinson and Anthony Steel.

Analysis of *The Wooden Horse* shows the strength of Howard Koch's point about the writer: in this case the essential limitations of the film are undoubtedly his. The writer, nevertheless, does not create cinema, only its raw material, even when his script may dictate a style. It has been said that *The Wooden Horse* is well directed, which is true, but probably not in the sense the remark was intended. The film is scarcely evidence of its director's talents or limitations: the emotional appeal of the story, independent of the way it is told, seems to be a guarantee of success, and the director's craftsmanship has merely realised this popular conception. The level of the film should not necessarily be taken as his own. But the limitation of Mr. Koch's argument is that it can only be applied as a plea for recognition of the good writer—who is certainly too often neglected. An inadequate writer, though, can also be responsible for the misjudging of a director—especially a relatively inexperienced one, who needs extra confidence in his material.

A more experienced director, faced with unsatisfactory material, may yet be able to make something more of it, if only by an exaggerated display of style in a vacuum. This, in the past, has happened to John Huston. After the success of his first film, *The Maltese Falcon*, which he adapted, cast and directed, he made an indifferent thriller called *Across the Pacific*, where he had no hand in the script. This was an attempt, presumably inspired by the production company, to repeat the success of *The Maltese Falcon* with the same three stars: a conventional, episodic story did not allow Huston to display the force and concentration of style of which he had already shown himself capable—instead, he brightened it with some rather ostentatious effects that are certainly not characteristic of the films he has written and directed. His third film, *In This our Life*, was again somebody else's adaptation, but by good fortune none other than Mr. Koch's, and some good writing enabled Huston to return to a study of character in the hard, plain, precise style he has since developed. This was the result of a sympathetic collaboration between director and writer: and another example is that between Mr. Koch and Max Ophuls on *Letter from an Unknown Woman*. But while Mr. Koch would rightly insist that a less careful and imaginative treatment of the material in both these films would have been a serious vitiation, there is no doubt that as cinema they could hardly be more different. And cinema, in the director's sense, is not only tempo and visual style, but dramatic response to place and character.

The source of Huston's new film is a screenplay by himself and Ben Maddow from a novel by W. R. Burnett (who wrote *Little Caesar*). The story tells of six men who plan a robbery in a big city. The originator of the plan is a fanatical German doctor recently released from prison: the "hooligan" is a young Southerner, hardened and corrupted by city life, but still with a vague dream of returning home one day: the safe-cracker is an Italian-American with a wife and two children; the fence, an unscrupulous lawyer with a taste for luxury and young girls, temporarily embarrassed for money but scheming to cheat the others. The first part of the film introduces us to the various characters and the seamy world they inhabit: it is a brilliant revelation of crime as a highly organised business, its matter-of-fact precision achieving a far more real sordidness than bravura camerawork or the sensational methods of a Dassin. The second part deals with the actual execution of the robbery, the cracking of a safe in a jewellery store. This is a finely developed sequence, but with no concessions to the easier kind of excitement: the emphasis still remains on tensions between the characters as they work to the meticulous timing of the doctor's plan. The third part, the aftermath, beginning with the lawyer's duplicity being exposed, is necessarily more diffuse, for the characters split up, and we see each one captured or killed, but not as a direct consequence of the crime. The lawyer shoots himself when police investigation of a murder he did not commit threatens to disclose his other guilt: the doctor, en route for Mexico, tarries at a roadside café to watch the sinuous movements of a jitterbugging teen-ager, and does not see the police approaching the café until it is too late. The Southerner, in the concluding episode, drives with his girl friend back to the country where he was born. A festering wound from a bullet that scraped him is causing a haemorrhage: he reaches the fields of his boyhood, and falls down dead.

As in nearly all his previous films, Huston has selected a group of people whose conflicting motives and ambitions set the course of the story, and provide a dual tension, since their activities are usually illegal and the relations between them constantly changing. In *The Asphalt Jungle*, as in *The Maltese Falcon* and *Treasure of the Sierra Madre*, the people are brought together by common greed. But whether the motives are noble (as in *We Were Strangers*) or debased, Huston's attitude remains objective. His observation is sharp, and the characters here of the Southern hoodlum, his pathetic girl friend, the German with his icy calculation and formal manner, and the lecherous shyster lawyer, played with great realism by Sterling Hayden, Jean Hagen, Sam Jaffe and Louis Calhern respectively, are as brilliant as any he has presented. But a refusal to identify himself with any character, to show compassion, to leave the outside view, requires a

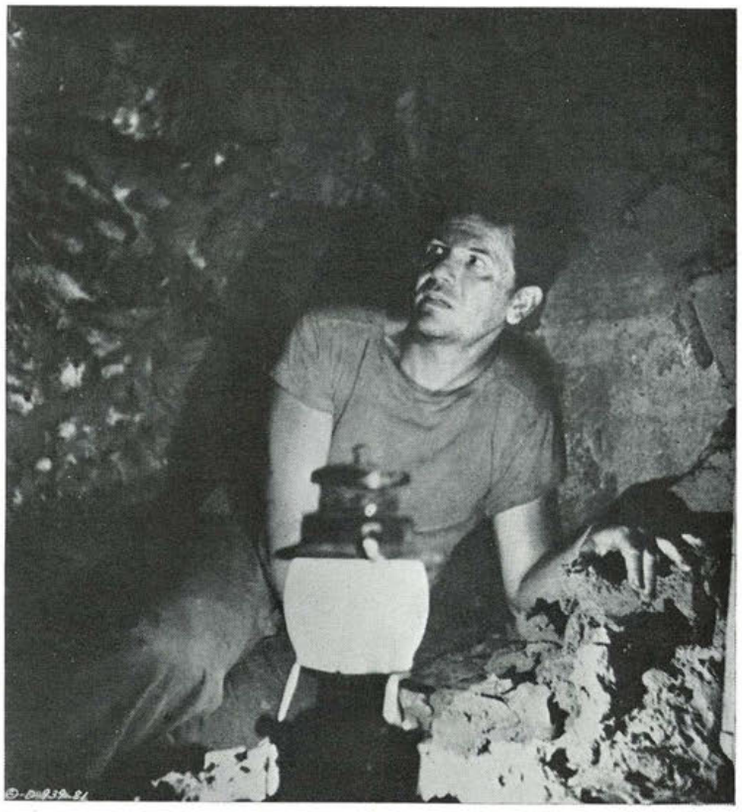
"The Asphalt Jungle". Planning of the robbery. Sam Jaffe (left), Sterling Hayden (centre), James Whitmore (centre right)

"The Asphalt Jungle". Jean Hagen, Sterling Hayden

complete power of analysis that the film does not wholly sustain. It falls short of a cruel, definitive picture of the squalor and corruption of a big city as well as of a humane one. The portrait of the hoodlum who at moments regrets his lost innocence is drawn with no more sympathy than the others, and yet it is on his fate that the film concludes, building up rather protractedly to his death in the fields. This final stroke is highly effective, but its emphasis also sums up the limited human approach.

The strong, confident style, the presentation of duplicity seasoned with irony, leaves one in no doubt of the force of personality behind *The Asphalt Jungle*. For its personality alone, it makes a much stronger impact than *The Wooden Horse;* and, as representing the near best in current American production, its level is more rewarding than the impersonal competence which marks *The Wooden Horse* and some other similar films, such as *Morning Departure* and *Odette*.

The British films have notably strong material, their intentions are honest, their approach workmanlike (and *Morning Departure*, perhaps, brings more showmanship to its subject than the other two); their ready emotional appeal also makes them box-office successes, which at this time is highly important; but they do not really penetrate below the surface, and the personal flair which justly gained British films a reputation during and after the war, is missing. It is not that the impetus supplied by *The Way Ahead, Western Approaches* and others is lacking, that the talent has suddenly collapsed. With sympathetic script collaboration, David Lean sustained a personal style from *Brief Encounter* to his Dickens adaptations: Reed has made two successful films in close partnership with Graham Greene: Thorold Dickinson took over *The Queen of Spades* and made something remarkable of it: Hamer proved himself a writer-director of distinction in *Kind Hearts and Coronets: Chance of a Lifetime* and *Whisky Galore* also reveal definite personalities (both Bernard Miles and Alexander Mackendrick, it may be noted, worked on the scripts of their films). But without good material to shape, Lean in his last two films and Hamer in *The Spider and the Fly* could not sustain their level. Of course every director cannot be a writer, but every director *needs* a writer, whom he can from the start look to, depend on, cajole, bully, as the case may be. Some of these terms will no doubt draw a protest from Mr. Koch, but even Greene, as he confesses in the introduction to his published film stories, did not have it all his own way with Reed. The ultimate form of a really satisfying film can only be determined by one creative personality who combines its various elements, and this must be the director. The balance in these relationships is not always easy to maintain. Some of the films mentioned show that there are a number of British producers who know how to create the right conditions; who realise that the valid documentary technique developed in British feature films during the war must not become merely surface imitation of itself, and do not like to see skilled craftsmanship wearing itself out on indifferent material. Others, it seems, are not wholly aware of the danger—and the resulting films lack the strength, the singleness of purpose which distinguish films made by those who, for want of another word, Thorold Dickinson has called "filmwrights".



"We Were Strangers". John Garfield

ACTING

Philip Hope-Wallace

WHATEVER HAS BEEN SAID of internationalism in the last fifty years, nations and their characteristics die hard. Acting must always be largely an affair of national temperament; grief as depicted by, say, Miss Fay Bainter, might not be intelligible to a hottentot or vice versa. As long as acting is something slightly larger than life—as it always must be in the theatre—the fact that playing consists of miming the emotions and that in the case of certain nations, natural behaviour consists in expunging all trace of emotions from the mask, can to some extent be ignored. Generally in your English types of a certain sensitivity (or breeding, if the word is allowed) all effort tends towards the cultivation of a perfectly blank expression; this is merely a convention, though horrid foreigners have insisted on regarding it as evidence of a phlegmatic disposition. It is a convention, even as much as the set simper with which a Japanese will learn of some catastrophe such as the imminent death of a mother-in-law.

English acting of the latterday naturalistic school has taken stock of this; rigidity, silence, a finger traced along the collar, a cigarette tapped, a needle stopped in mid-stitchery—by such means have emotions been nevertheless conveyed. These, be they on ever so small a scale, are none the less gestures of a kind, active expressions well understood by the English themselves, if not always by foreigners. The latter of course are endowed with bags of temperament, and even when not very volatile, like the Swedes, at least they have bags under the eyes and can signal Strindbergian agonies by a sort of mild apoplexy. "Swedish actors", said one of them to me recently, "generally do too much or too little. If only they could learn to do just the right amount like Sir late Leslie Howard". I saw what was meant.

Further south there is no trouble at all. South of, say, Dijon the mildest altercation about a tram ticket brings forth gestures and facial play and a variety of tone levels which would carry many an Old Vic actor through all the parts of Henry VI at once. Under the microscope of the camera's eye, such people generally have to tone themselves down considerably, merely to achieve a norm of naturalism. With us though, it is rather the other way about, and the question is; how far may we go and still look British?

I was thinking about this problem of the wooden look in a recent British film, much enjoyed, about an escape from a Luftstalag in Germany—a heroic story, told in print with an attractive naivety (a quality often overrated). The film was called *The Wooden Horse* and gave pleasure, though not to connoisseurs, being myopically directed and lame in both dialogues. The problem was this; naturalism demands that young R.A.F. Officers should look as blank and sound as inarticulate as they really are or were. Histrionic necessity asks for something a little more; too much more and it would seem hopelessly untrue, but too little, and what happens? Well, nothing happens. One was often really hard put to it to imagine what was supposed to be going on inside the heads of Leo Genn and Anthony Steel. Take that moment of sickening anxiety, when in the railway station the fugitives passed close to the German corporal from the camp—without being recognised. What was happening inside the rigid men in danger ought there to have been communicated. We, as well as they, should have our hearts in our mouths. In fact neither actor (one of whom is highly experienced) nor the camera did anything whatsoever to spring the imagination. This, it may be said, was deliberate. "We don't call attention to these things in England" as one's nurse used to say. But I cannot help feeling it a defect. I fancy an Elia Kazan, though not necessarily dealing with players or a situation intrinsically better, would somehow have made that encounter memorable, be it only by siting, cutting, timing, shifting emphasis. Whereas here it went, one could not but feel, in all charity—for exactly nothing.

So too in the tunnel, where the fugitives tended to look hot but baffled. No doubt that is how it was in life; and we may be thankful that the R.A.F. contained as many unhistrionic types as it did. But in films about them, not for the first time, the difficulty of dramatising phlegm throws a responsibility on the director, as dramatic agent, which he is all too seldom able to shoulder.

Of course one may rush to the other extreme. A performance which has been generally described as grand and which remains at least in the memory was Robert Newton's in *Treasure Island*. Though hardly one's exact idea of Long John Silver, more in fact like a gipsy brought in to help with the hay making and frightening the wits out of the village children, he at least put on a display of "acting" which none could fail to notice. But how expressive was it? Not very, I thought. Mr. Newton rolled his eyes and leered and mouthed, but one often did not understand very clearly what was being expressed.

Another performance which has interested me much was Edwige Feuillère in Ophuls' sensitively directed *Sans Lendemain*, a sort of Colette and cream affair, with trimmings from Dumas *fils*. Here was French favourite number one, the lady of a certain age who has gone to the bad but wants to seem good to the one man she really loves. A friend (or father or brother) finds out and upbraids her. "Lache, ignoble, impure!" etc. Raising eyes misty with tragic innocence she murmurs 'Ah monsieur, si vous saviez ce que la créature tombée . . .' and so on. Any French actress can do this passably; all she has to do is to give an imitation of a perfectly understood figure of convention; analogous to our native 'brilliant' cockney interpretations by Gladys Henson or Kathleen Harrison. It is something to be able to add a note of real feeling, which I am bound to say Mme Feuillère does, though I would wish to see the film again before deciding how much the responsibility is hers, how much the director's. After all, Ophuls made James Mason appear to act wonderfully. I hope Mme Feuillère will make *La Dame aux Camélias* before she gets too old. It should be a corrective to Garbo's handsome but misconceived Scandinavian interpretation of Marguérite Gautier's brief bonheur—"Oh yass; I'm huppy. I read cookbooks all morning".

Somewhere between Mr. Steel, Mme Feuillère and Mr. Newton lies I suppose a norm, but what the norm is will always be largely an affair of taste and national feeling.

"The Private life of Henry VIII".

THE IMPRESARIO URGE

Peter Price

IT'S A PLEASING CONCEIT for the potential film producer to fancy himself as the budding Diaghileff of the medium and bandy famous names about his pipe dreams. Hasn't anyone ever planned a Technicolor version of *Howard's End* with a screenplay by T. S. Eliot set to music by Hindemith with sets by Matisse? Five years ago you might have seen it announced in the New Year issue of a trade journal (and subsequently written up, with photographs, in *Vogue's* Spotlight), and even now some pretty startling combinations get contemplated from time to time.

Few producers achieve a state of free will where they can actually make an interesting salad of talent—they get overwhelmed by the juggernaut of contract commitments, Wardour Street requirements, the hunt for hard cash, the invariable day-to-day panics of production.

The fact remains that there have been impresario moments in this country, and typically enough they have belonged to foreigners. Perhaps the accent is the determining factor. Do our native adventurers speak too clearly? Or are they insufficiently grandiose? Could it ever be that they are too intelligent? For with our industry in the hands of people mostly of no great cultural pretension, it would seem that only a strange blend of semi-intelligence—part genius, part showman, part charlatan—can hope to get away with it and please both sides of the fence. Another very important factor is timing, for only every decade or so does the expansive

moment arrive, with vast profits in view and liberal-mindedness rampant.

Since sound arrived the British cinema has had two promising periods, and two producers who have used them to initiate a series of films which were above the prevailing average, and who left a generally higher standard behind. These were the pre-war Korda, and Del Giudice. To say this is not to decry the efforts of our more solid producers, but their targets have been different.

We would have even less of a film industry in this country if it were not for those producers who prefer to stay in business rather than to aim at extending the frontiers of the medium. But this article is concerned with those who play for the highest stakes, and in this field the palm for the most remarkable level of production is still shared by Alexander Korda and Filippo del Guidice.

Korda's remarkable feat was to create, himself, the conditions which made his series possible. The staggering success of *Henry VIII* also set the mould for his subsequent productions.* He gave us pretension, spectacle, patriotism, cleavage, served up in varying proportions, and always with a splendid gloss over them. At the beginning it seems to have been the combination of lighting by Périnal, sets by Vincent Korda, and costumes by John Armstrong. Other names appeared later, but the effect was much the same—there was a look of quality about the product. The scripts and direction were often indifferent, but never so the appeal to the eye.

Then he tackled another of the senses. The appointment of Muir Mathieson began a revolution in film music. Soon enough the cinema began to hear music of quality, even if the result sometimes was (and sometimes still is) a famous name on the credits and distinguished music quite inapposite for the picture. The fact remains that England was here ahead of Hollywood.

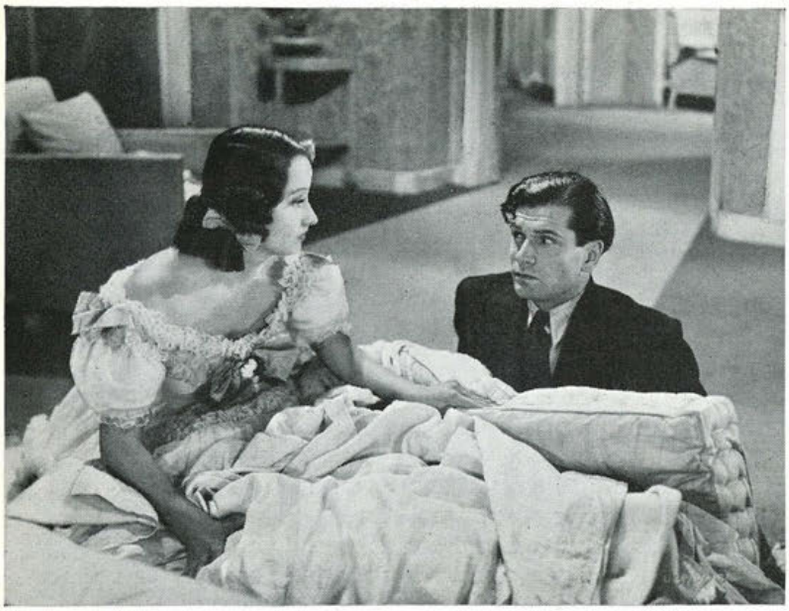
And if these achievements are the ones that are remembered now, it isn't as if Korda didn't try to display the great impresario flair for hiring exciting directors. The idea of inviting René Clair and Jacques Feyder to work here was courageous enough, but the resulting films are simply not the ones that spring to mind when assessing their work.

It was in his choice of stars that Korda was happiest, for to have built up Charles Laughton, Robert Donat, Laurence Olivier and Ralph Richardson is something scarcely to be overlooked. But the talkies have come of age now, and the old showmanship of big stars and production value is ceasing to satisfy even the box-office. Korda hasn't made a really significant contribution to the medium since the 'thirties—he makes the same sort of picture but it isn't news any more. Or perhaps we have yet to see. Almost all the directors who put Rank on the map are now with London Films.* Even if he never again

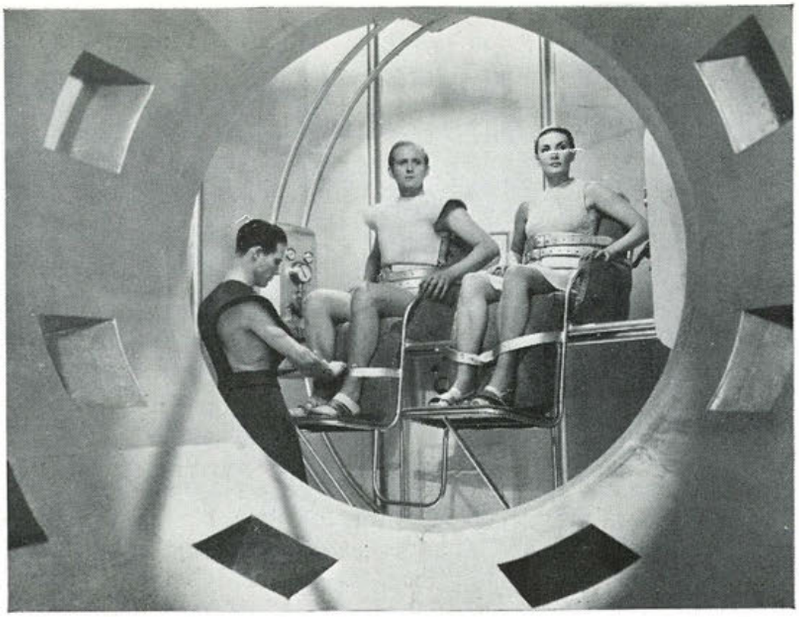
* Korda's pre-war productions included : *Henry VIII*, *Rembrandt*, *Catherine the Great*, *The Private Life of Don Juan*, *The Scarlet Pimpernel*, *Sanders of the River*, *The Ghost Goes West*, *Things to Come*, *The Man Who Could Work Miracles*, *Fire Over England*, *Knight Without Armour*, *The Divorce of Lady X*, *Storm in a Teacup*, *South Riding*, *The Drum*, *The Four Feathers*.

* Producers and directors now allied with London Films include Carol Reed, Powell and Pressburger, Launder and Gilliat, Anthony Kimmins, Zoltan Korda, Robert Donat and David Lean.

Charles Laughton in "Rembrandt". Attention to detail and historical correctness don't always extend any further than to sets and costumes, but they didn't always extend even that far.



Merle Oberon and Laurence Olivier in "The Divorce of Lady X". Here Korda pioneered the bedroom scene in Technicolor.



"Things to Come": a change from cleavage in this tantalising promise of pneumatic bliss. It didn't seem nearly so funny at the time.

charts a new stretch of cinematic territory, it is silly to deny Korda credit—as some do—for those stretches he was charting fifteen years ago.

So the scope was much greater when Del Giudice arrived. Here again was a man who really cared about films—after all, it does need saying, it's not every producer who does. Del Giudice did not create his market in so spectacular a way, but he had other points. He started a decade later and his story sense was better. At a decade later, it needed to be.†

He believed that the industrial tail was wagging the artistic dog, and he set about trying to free the creative talent from business worries and interference. He rightly declined to be described as a producer, and attempted—as "Administrator" —to keep Wardour Street away from Denham. In this process he fell into a trap which his own character laid for him. Indeed he was not a producer in the same sense as Korda, for Korda knows something of the actual craft and will direct a film himself if he wants to. Whereas Del Giudice was more of a stimulator. Possibly that is why he was able to write—"We all know that if you have a very good director, it is useless to interfere with his work. If you interfered it would be like looking over the shoulder of Picasso or Augustus John whilst they are doing their work. Anybody really great could not stand being watched in that way. If one makes the mistake of appointing a mediocre director, his work will be all the better if he is left alone." There is something disarmingly innocent in this comparison between a film and a painter's studio, but was the reader meant to be so innocent, or was it Del Giudice himself who was? In fact he was trying to go from one extreme to the other, and he gave his film makers such a heady draught of self-importance that they were soon understandably giddy.

The wine was stimulating before it proved disastrous. Del Giudice effectively raided the stage for fresh directors, and had the courage not to be content with world names like Coward and Olivier, as witness Bernard Miles and Peter Ustinov. Not one of these was regarded as a safe bet at the time. He even gave great opportunities to regular film people, both in promoting them and in giving them a chance to make the sort of film they themselves wanted to make. Unfortunately, he was at the same time committed to production in a big studio, and this meant that his mistakes were disproportionately expensive.

Is the craftsman a good judge of what to make? The argument can go on all night, particularly when there is a craftsman present. But nobody pretends that the Russian Ballet would have been better off without Diaghileff. Could it be that Del Giudice really didn't know enough about producing films, hence his red herring about interference? Interference is a real enough danger, and so is a vacuum.

Perhaps it will be possible to breed the director-producer who can consistently survive the tempest of making films and still keep his critical faculties intact, but it is bound to be a slower process than Del Giudice thought, and there is plenty of recent evidence that those who command their own terms tend to become long-winded, even to go sterile.

It doesn't necessarily follow that what we need are genius producers. Who can tell what would have happened to the co-operative Independent Producers if they hadn't had Gabriel Pascal settled on them?‡ Do Launder and Gilliat keep their feet on the ground because they (presumably) have a sense of humour, or is it because there are two of them? It is possible that you might get superlative results with production by committee, if you had the right committee. But this, as well as being unlikely, is a separate subject.

So to say that during the peak periods of Korda and Del Giudice we came nearest to an exciting time in British films doesn't mean that self-discipline or group discipline will never produce exciting times, and that we must look for another giant, only bigger. But we shall probably get him all the same, and the way things are he will probably make more headway than even those long overdue reforms which we are so often

† Del Guidice's "administrations" included: *French Without Tears*, *Freedom Radio*, *The Demi-Paradise*, *The Way to the Stars* (Asquith), *Odd Man Out*, *The Way Ahead* (Reed), *This Happy Breed*, *Blithe Spirit* (Lean), *In Which We Serve* (Coward), *Henry V*, *Hamlet* (Olivier), *School for Secrets*, *Vice Versa*, *Private Angelo* (Ustinov), *Men of Two Worlds* (Dickinson), *The Guinea Pig*, *Fame is the Spur* (Boultings), *Tawny Pipit*, *Chance of a Lifetime* (Miles), *The Gentle Sex*, *The Lamp Still Burns* (Howard).

‡ Independent Producers at one time included Lean, Neame and Havelock-Allan (*Cineguild*), Launder and Gilliat (*Individual*), Powell and Pressburger (*Archers*), Dalrymple (*Wessex*). The organisation is now extinct.

On "Henry V" everyone concerned had to use his imagination. The venture was looked at askance, even by colleagues in the studio. Circumstances were very different for "Hamlet".

told the industry needs. We can't just wait for political solutions—we're dealing with an art form, no matter what Miss Lejeune may say. Even the commercial wizards think so, though they'd die sooner than admit it—it's implicit in their slogan that there's nothing wrong with picture business that a good picture can't cure.

Of course there are many who maintain that it's only commerce that keeps art from the public, and in a way this will always be true; but we must still face the fact that Hollywood makes more stimulating pictures more consistently than we do, and this just could have something to do with their Zanucks and Goldwyns and Dore Scharys.

When you work it out, it is quite extraordinary how many qualities a producer needs to stay in business, much less become the darling of the Third Programme. The producer who is going to do both has got quite a bill to fill. He has got have the respect of both Wardour Street and of his artists,

Michael Redgrave and Rosamund John in "Fame is the Spur".

who must be consciously stimulated and unconsciously disciplined through their respect for him. He must know as well as understand a very great deal about the various arts that go into a good film. He has got to know the difference between unavoidable waste and lunatic extravagance; and he must never persuade anyone, least of all himself, that lavishness has got anything to do with imagination. As well as integrity, he must even have a point of view of his own.

This year brings in a new decade; the collapse of the latest régime is almost complete, and the gangplank will soon be ready. Within the next two years we will probably discover the next candidate. He is probably around somewhere already. This time he may even be a native. He may be an artist *manqué* who is at present sublimating his creative urge under a black hat in the City. More likely he is on the dole. Since he has got to be a superman he is quite likely to be an extremely difficult character—but of course not *too* difficult.

Don't we all wish we knew who he was.

The war film made great strides after "In Which we Serve", where realism came sandwiched between theatrical tears.

"The Way Ahead" still wears extremely well, which cannot be said of many war films.

Rich and poor in Griffith. Mae Marsh in "The White Rose"

DICKENS, GRIFFITH AND THE FILM TODAY (4)

S. M. Eisenstein

Eisenstein's last book, "Film Form", a collection of his miscellaneous writing over the last fifteen years, was published in America nearly two years ago. We are pleased to announce that Dennis Dobson Ltd. have acquired the rights for this country, and will publish the book at a later date. Meanwhile, Sight and Sound *has serialised parts of it each month: in this issue we conclude an important essay on Dickens and Griffith. The translation is by Jay Leyda.*

NONE THE LESS ENORMOUS was the role of Griffith also in the evolution of the system of Soviet montage: a role as enormous as the role of Dickens in forming the methods of Griffith. Dickens in this respect played an enormous role in heightening the tradition and cultural heritage of preceding epochs; just as on an even higher level we can see the enormous role of those social premises, which inevitably in those pivotal moments of history ever anew push elements of the montage methods into the centre of attention for creative work.

The role of Griffith is enormous, but our cinema is neither a poor relative nor an insolvent debtor of his. It was natural that the spirit and content of our country itself, in themes and subjects, would stride far ahead of Griffith's ideals as well as their reflection in artistic images.

In social attitudes Griffith was always a liberal, never departing far from the slightly sentimental humanism of the good old gentlemen and sweet old ladies of Victorian England, just as Dickens loved to picture them. His tender-hearted film morals go no higher than a level of Christian accusation of human injustice and nowhere in his films is there sounded a protest against social injustice.

In his best films he is a preacher of pacifism and compromise with fate (*Isn't Life Wonderful?*) or love of mankind "in general" (*Broken Blossoms*). Here in his reproaches and condemnations Griffith is sometimes able to ascend to magnificent pathos (in, for example, *Way Down East*).

In the more thematically dubious of his works—this takes the form of an apology for the Dry Law (in *The Struggle*) or for the metaphysical philosophy of the eternal origins of Good and Evil (in *Intolerance*). Metaphysics permeates the film which he based on Marie Corelli's *Sorrows of Satan*. Finally, among the most repellent elements in his films (and there are such) we see Griffith as an open apologist for racism, erecting a celluloid monument to the Klu Klux Klan, and joining their attack on Negroes in *The Birth of a Nation*.

Nevertheless, nothing can take from Griffith the wreath of one of the genuine masters of the American cinema.

But montage thinking is inseparable from the general content of thinking as a whole. The structure that is reflected in the concept of Griffith montage is the structure of bourgeois society. And he actually resembles Dickens' "side of streaky, well-cured bacon"; in actuality (and this is no joke) he is woven of irreconcilably alternating layers of "white" and "red"—rich and poor. (This is the eternal theme of Dickens' novels, nor does he move beyond these divisions. His mature work, *Little Dorrit*, is so divided into two books: "Poverty" and "Riches"). And this society, perceived *only as a contrast between the haves and have-nots*, is reflected in the consciousness of Griffith no deeper than the image of an intricate race between two parallel lines.

Griffith primarily is the greatest master of the most graphic form in this field—a master of *parallel montage*. Above all else, Griffith is a great master of montage constructions that have been created in a direct-lined quickening and *increase of tempo* (chiefly in the direction of the higher forms of parallel montage).

The school of Griffith before all else is a school of *tempo*. However, he did not have the strength to compete with the young Soviet school of montage in the field of expression and of relentlessly affective *rhythm*, the task of which goes far beyond the narrow confines of tempo tasks.

It was exactly this feature of *devastating rhythm* as distinguished from the effects of *tempo* that was noted at the appearance of our first Soviet films in America. After recognising the themes and ideas of our works it was this feature of our cinema that the American press of 1926-27 remarked.

But true rhythm presupposes above all organic *unity*.

Neither a successive mechanical alternation of cross-cuts, nor an interweaving of antagonistic themes, but above all a unity, which in the play of inner contradictions, through a shift of the play in the direction of tracing its organic pulse—that is what lies at the base of rhythm. This is not an outer

unity of story, bringing with it also the classical image of the chase-scene, but that inner unity which can be realised in montage as an entirely different system of construction, in which so-called parallel montage can figure as one of the highest or particularly personal variants.

And, naturally, the montage concept of Griffith, as a primarily parallel montage, appears to be a copy of his dualistic picture of the world, running in two parallel lines of poor and rich towards some hypothetical "reconciliation" where . . . parallel lines would cross, that is, in that infinity just as inaccessible as that "reconciliation".

Thus it was to be expected that our concept of montage had to be born from an entirely different "image" of an understanding of phenomena, which was opened to us by a world-view both monistic and dialectic.

For us the microcosm of montage had to be understood as a unity, which in the inner stress of contradictions is halved, in order to be re-assembled in a new unity on a new plane, qualitatively higher, its imagery newly perceived.

I attempted to give theoretical expression to this *general tendency* of our understanding of montage, and advanced this in 1929, thinking least of all at that time to what degree our method of montage both generically and in principle was in opposition to the montage of Griffith.

This was stated in the form of a definition of the *stages* of relationship between the shot and montage. Of the thematic unity of content in a film, of the "shot", of the "frame", I wrote:

> The shot is by no means an *element* of montage.
>
> The shot is a montage *cell.*
>
> Just as cells in their division form a phenomenon of another order, the organism or embryo, so, on the other side of the dialectical leap from the shot, there is montage.

Montage is the expansion of intra-shot conflict (or, contradiction) at first in the conflict of two shots standing side by side:

> Conflict within the shot is potential montage, in the development of its intensity shattering the quadrilateral cage of the shot and exploding its conflict into montage impulses *between* the montage pieces.

Then—the threading of the conflict through a whole system of planes, by means of which ". . . we newly collect the disintegrated event into one whole, but in *our* aspect. According to the treatment of our relation to the event".

The distinction between the American and our montage concepts gains maximum sharpness and clarity if we glance at such a difference in principle of the understanding of another innovation, introduced by Griffith into cinematography and, in the same way, receiving at our hands an entirely different understanding.

We refer to the *close-up*, or as we speak of it, the "large scale".

This distinction in principle begins with an essence that exists in the term itself.

We say: an object or face is photographed in "large scale", i.e. *large.*

The American says: *near*, or "close-up".

We are speaking of the *qualitative* side of the phenomenon, linked with its meaning (just as we speak of a *large* talent, that is, of one which stands out, by its significance, from the general line, or of *large* print (bold-face) to emphasise that which is particularly essential or significant).

Among Americans the term is attached to *view-point.*

Among us—to *the value of what is seen.*

We shall see below what a profound distinction in principle is here, after we have understood the system which, both in method and in application, uses the "large scale" in our cinema in a way distinguished from the use of the "close-up" by the American cinema.

In this comparison immediately the first thing to appear clearly relating to the principle function of the close-up in our cinema is—not only and not so much to *show* or to *present*, as to *signify*, to *give meaning*, to *designate.*

In our own way we very quickly realised the very nature of the "close-up" after this had been hardly noticed in its sole capacity as a means of showing, in American cinema practice.

The first factor that attracted us in the method of the close-up was the discovery of its particularly astonishing feature: to create *a new quality of the whole from a juxtaposition of the separate parts.*

Where the isolated close-up in the tradition of the Dickens kettle was often a determining or "key" detail in the work of Griffith, where the alternation of close-ups of faces was an anticipation of the future synchronised dialogue (it may be apropos here to mention that Griffith, in his sound film, did not freshen a single method then in use)—there we advanced the idea of a *principally new qualitative fusion*, flowing out of the process of *juxtaposition.*

For example, in almost my first spoken and written declarations of the 'twenties, I designated the cinema as above all else an "art of juxtaposition".

If Gilbert Seldes is to be believed, Griffith himself came to the point of seeing "that by dovetailing the ride of the rescuers and the terror of the besieged in a scene, he was multiplying the emotional effect enormously; the whole was infinitely greater than the sum of its parts", but this was also insufficient for us.

For us this *qualitative accumulation* even in such "multiplying" situations was not enough: we sought for and found in juxtapositions more than that—*a qualitative leap.*

The leap proved beyond the *limits of the possibilities* of the stage—a leap beyond the *limits of situation:* a leap into the field of montage *image*, montage *understanding*, montage as a means before all else of revealing the *ideological conception.*

Griffith's cinema does not know this type of montage construction. His close-ups create atmosphere, outline traits of the characters, alternate in dialogues of the leading characters, and close-ups of the chaser and the chased speed up the tempo of the chase. But Griffith at all times remains on a level of *representation and objectivity* and nowhere does he try through the *juxtaposition* of shots to shape *import and image.*

However, within the practice of Griffith there was such an attempt, an attempt of huge dimensions—*Intolerance.*

Terry Ramsaye, a historian of the American film, has definitively called it "a giant metaphor". No less definitively has he called it also "a magnificent failure". For if *Intolerance* —in its modern story—stands unsurpassed by Griffith himself, a brilliant model of his method of montage, then at the same time, along the line of a desire to get away from the *limits of story* towards *the region of generalisation* and metaphorical allegory, the picture is overcome completely by failure. In explaining the failure of *Intolerance* Ramsaye claims:

> "Allusion, simile and metaphor can succeed in the printed and spoken word as an aid to the dim pictorial quality of the word expression. The motion picture has no use for them because it itself is the event. It is too specific and final to accept such aids. The only place that these verbal devices have on the screen is in support of the sub-

title or legends . . ."

But Terry Ramsaye is not correct in denying to cinematography *all possibility in general of imagistic story-telling*, in not permitting the assimilation of simile and metaphor to move, in its best instances, beyond the text of the sub-titles!

The reason for this failure was of quite another nature; particularly, in Griffith's misunderstanding, that the region of metaphorical and imagist writing appears in the sphere of *montage juxtaposition*, not of *representational montage pieces*.

Out of this came his unsuccessful use of the repeated refrain shot: Lillian Gish rocking a cradle. Griffith had been inspired to translate these lines of Walt Whitman:

> ". . . endlessly rocks the cradle, Uniter of Here and Hereafter", not in the structure, nor in *the harmonic recurrence of montage expressiveness*, but in *an isolated picture*, with the result that the cradle could not possibly be *abstracted into an image of eternally reborn epochs* and remained inevitably simply a *life-like cradle*, calling forth derision, surprise or vexation in the spectator.

This weaving of four epochs was magnificently conceived. Griffith stated:

> ". . . the stories will begin like four currents looked at from a hilltop. At first the four currents will flow apart, slowly and quietly. But as they grow nearer and nearer together, and faster and faster, until the end, in the last act, they mingle in one mighty river of expressed emotion".

But the effect didn't come off. For again it turned out to be a combination of *four different stories* rather than a *fusion of four phenomena* in a *single imagist generalisation*.

Griffith announced his film as "a drama of comparisons" and that is what *Intolerance* remains—a drama of comparisons, rather than *a unified, powerful, generalised image*.

It is not that representation cannot be raised with correct presentation and treatment to the structure of metaphor, simile, image. Nor is it that Griffith here altered his method, or his professional craftsmanship. But that he made no attempt to a genuinely thoughtful abstraction of phenomena—at an *extraction of generalised conclusions* on the historical phenomena from a wide variety of historical data; that is the core of the fault.

In history and economics it was necessary for the gigantic work of Marx and the continuers of his teaching to aid us in understanding *the laws of the process* that stand behind the miscellaneous *separate data*. Then science could succeed in abstracting *a generalisation from the chaos of separate traits* characteristic for the phenomena.

In the practice of American film studios there is a splendid professional term—"limitations". Such a director is "limited" to musical comedies. The "limits" of a certain actress are within fashionable roles. Beyond these "limitations" (quite sensible in most cases) this or that talent cannot be thrust. Risking departure from these "limitations" sometimes results in unexpected brilliance, but ordinarily, as in commonplace phenomena, this leads to failure.

Using this term, I would say that in the realm of *montage imagery* the American cinema wins no laurels for itself; and it is ideological "limitations" that are responsible for this.

This is not affected by technique, nor by scope, nor by dimensions.

The question of montage imagery is based on a definite structure and system of thinking; it derives and has been derived only through collective consciousness, appearing as a reflection of a new (socialist) stage of human society and as a thinking result of ideal and philosophic education, inseparably connected with the social structure of that society.

We, our epoch—*sharply ideal* and *intellectual*—could not read the content of a shot without, before all else, having read its ideological nature, and therefore find in the *juxtaposition of shots an arrangement of a new qualitative element*, a new *image*, a new *understanding*.

Considering this, we could not help rushing into sharp excesses in this direction.

In *October* we cut shots of harps and balalaikas into a scene of Mensheviks addressing the Second Congress of Soviets. And these harps were shown not as harps, but as an imagist symbol of the mellifluent speech of Menshevik opportunism at the Congress. The balalaikas were not shown as balalaikas, but as an image of the tiresome strumming of these empty speeches in the face of the gathering storm of historical events. And placing side by side the Menshevik and the harp, the Menshevik and the balalaika, we were *extending the frame of parallel montage into a new quality, into a new realm:* from the sphere of *action* into the sphere of *significance*.

The period of such rather naive juxtapositions passed swiftly enough. Similar solutions, slightly "baroque" in form, in many ways attempted (and not always successfully!) with the available palliative means of the silent film to anticipate that which is now done with such ease by the music track in the sound film! They quickly departed from the screen.

However, the chief thing remained—an understanding of montage as not merely a means of producing effects, but above all as a means of *speaking*, a means of *communicating* ideas, of communicating them by way of a special film language, by way of a special form of film *speech*.

Strike (1924) abounded in "trials" of this new and independent direction. The mass shooting of the demonstrators in the finale, interwoven with bloody scenes at the municipal slaughter-house merged (for that "childhood" of our cinema this sounded fully convincing and produced a great impression!) in a film-metaphor of a "human slaughter-house", absorbing itself in the memory of bloody repressions on the part of the autocracy. Here already were not the simple "contemplative" *contrasts* of *Palace and Fortress*, but already —though still crude and still "handmade"—a consistent and conscious attempt at *juxtaposition*.

Juxtaposition, striving to tell about an execution of workers not only in representations, but further also through a generalised "plastic turn of speech", approaching a verbal image of "a bloody slaughter house".

In *Potemkin* three *separate* close ups of three different marble lions in different attitudes were merged into *one* roaring lion and, moreover, in another *film dimension*—an embodiment of a metaphor: "*The very stones roar*"!

Griffith shows us an ice-break rushing along. Somewhere in the centre of the splintering ice lies, unconscious, Anna (Lillian Gish). Leaping from ice-cake to ice-cake comes David (Richard Barthelmess) to save her.

But the parallel *race of the ice-break* and of *the human actions* are nowhere brought together by him in a unified image of "*a human flood*", a mass of people bursting their fetters, as there is, for example, in the finale of *Mother*, by Gorky-Zarkhi-Pudovkin.

Of course, on this path excesses also occur, and also bald failures; of course, in more than a few examples these were good intentions defeated by shortcomings in compositional principles and by insufficient reasons for them in the context: then, in place of a flashing unity of image, a miserable trope is left on the level of an unrealised fusion, on the level of a

mechanical pasting together of the type of "Came the rain and two students".

But thus or otherwise the dual *parallel rows* characteristic of Griffith ran in our cinema on the way to realising themselves in the future *unity of the montage image* at first as a whole series of plays of montage comparisons, montage metaphors, montage puns.

These were more or less stormy floods, all serving to make clearer and clearer the final main task in the montage side of creative work—the creation in it of an inseparable domination of the *image*, of *the unified montage image*, of the *montage-built image, embodying the theme*, as this was achieved in the "Odessa steps" of *Potemkin*, in the "attack of the Kappel Division" of *Chapayev*, in the hurricane of *Storm Over Asia*, in the Dnieper prologue of *Ivan*, more weakly—the landing of *We From Kronstadt*, with new strength in "Bozhenko's funeral" in *Schors*, in Vertov's *Three Songs About Lenin*, in the "attack of the knights" in *Alexander Nevsky* . . . This is the glorious *independent* path of the Soviet cinema—the path of the creation of the *montage image-episode*, the *montage image-event*, the *montage image-film in its entirety*—of equal rights, of equal influence and equal responsibility in the perfect film—on an equal footing with the *image of the hero*, with the *image of man, and of the people*.

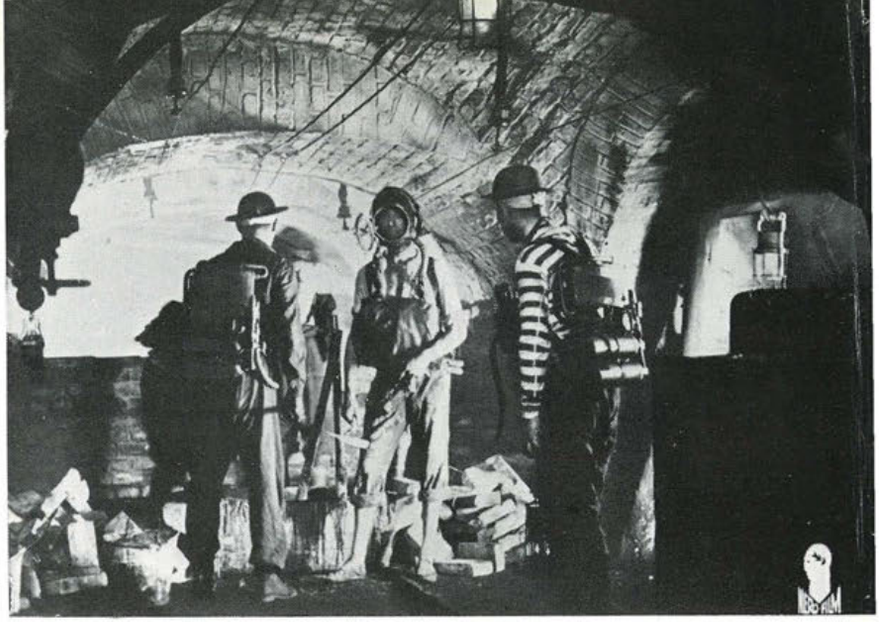
Our conception of montage has far outgrown the classic dualistic montage esthetic of Griffith, symbolised by the two never-convergent parallel racers, interweaving the thematically variegated strips with a view towards the mutual intensification of entertainment, tension and tempi.

For us montage became a means of achieving *a unity of a higher order*—a means *through the montage image of achieving an organic embodiment of a single idea conception, embracing all elements, parts, details of the film-work*.

And thus understood, it seems considerably broader than an understanding of narrowly cinematographic montage; thus understood, it carries much to fertilize and enrich our understanding of art methods in general.

A composite montage, after Eisenstein, of Soviet cinema. Top left: image of man, "We from Kronstadt". Top right: image of the hero, "Alexander Nevsky". Below: image of the people, "October"

(*concluded*)



"Kameradschaft"

REVALUATIONS—6

Roger Manvell

KAMERADSCHAFT (1931)

Directed by G. W. Pabst for Nerofilm. *Assistant director:* Herbert Rappaport. *Screenplay by* Karl Otten, Ernst Vajda and P. M. Lampel. *Photography by* Fritz Arno Wagner and R. Baberski. *Design by* Erno Metzner and Karl Vollbrecht. *Editing by* Hans Oser. *With* (German Artists) Alexander Granach, Fritz Kampers, E. Busch, Elizabeth Wendt, G. Puttjer, O. Hocker. (French Artists) D. Mendaille, G. Charlia, A. Duret, A. Bernard, P. Louis, Helena Manson.

IN THIS AGE of thickening political hides, the effectiveness of Pabst's former liberalism, which was applauded some twenty years ago when *Kameradschaft* was first being shown, has now been called in question. Siegfried Kracauer has pointed out that the simple socialist philosophy which inspired the film on the eve of Hitler's rise to ultimate power in Germany represents the essential weakness of Germany democracy through which Hitler's jackboots strode as if through water. This criticism of Pabst's liberalism was reinforced when it was discovered that he had not retired during the war, as his admirers had hoped, but had given his name and his talent to films which supported the Nazis. Although he has now been "de-Nazified" as the official terminology puts it, it is not easy to look at *Kameradschaft* with quite the same eyes as one did in the 'thirties. The fact that many of us at the time shared the same faith in the efficacy of the liberal decencies and were proved wrong during this tragic decade, does not give back to the film the strength it formerly seemed to possess. Its special virtue is now seen to lie in the integrity of its artistic values rather than in the over-simple social philosophy that it represents.

Kracauer in effect makes this point in *From Caligari to Hitler:*

> "Pabst adopted the socialist ideas of class solidarity and pacifism at a time when these ideas had degenerated into anemic abstractions and as a consequence the Social Democrats could not be expected to cope with the actual situation. In fact, as if the dead weight of an outworn ideology had exhausted them, the Social Democrats watched the Nazi movement grow and grow without stirring from their apathy. *Comradeship* reflects this exhaustion!"

This, of course, is an interpretation based on the knowledge of what happened later. At the time it was first shown, *Kameradschaft* seemed to be from all points of view, social as well as artistic, an outstanding event in the early history of the newly-established sound film. The late William Hunter in *Scrutiny of Cinema* (1932) wrote as follows of it and of its pacifist predecessor, *Westfront* 1918:

> "When the technique of the sound cinema is mature, and when the films of 1928-32 will seem as naive as the pre-war cinema's 'tragedies', these two films will continue to be fresh and valid, because, although their technical handling is remarkable, it is quite subordinate to the main purpose of the films".

Similarly, Paul Rotha in *Documentary Film* spoke of the importance of *Kameradschaft* to the future development of documentary:

> "I am greatly of the opinion that *Kameradschaft*, quite distinct from Pabst's other and less satisfactory work, pointed the way which the documentary of tomorrow may take. That is to imply a closer link to the story-film as we know it today but still remaining distinct in its approach to material and its emphasis on method".

Kameradschaft, in spite of this naiveté in its social philosophy, still remains a very important film. It is the direct predecessor of films like *Boomerang*, in which a true story illustrating directly and simply the struggle of the human decencies against graft and bureaucracy is reconstructed almost entirely on location, using a mixed cast of professional and non-professional actors. It is well-known that *Kameradschaft* is based on an actual event which took place sometime before the first World War, when German miners went to the assistance of French miners just over the border after a disaster at Courrières. Pabst brought the story forward to the period immediately after the Versailles treaty, and gave it the pacifist-socialist interpretation fashionable among the liberal-minded left-wing at the time. Kracauer emphasises this point:

> "*Comradeship* advocated the international solidarity of the Workers, characterizing them as the pioneers of a society in which national egoism, this eternal source of wars, will be abolished. It is the German miners, not their superiors, who conceive the idea of the rescue action. The scene in which they

"Kameradschaft". Meeting of the German and French miner

urge the director to consent is the more revealing as it illustrates the omnipotence of authoritarian rule in the German mine".

While the exteriors which make up the greater part of the film were shot on location at an actual mining town, Erno Metzner, Pabst's art director, constructed all the subterranean mining scenes in a studio. Everyone agrees that these sets remain among the most effective and authentic ever to have been built artificially for the screen.

But the authenticity goes beyond the effective use of locations or the scientifically accurate reconstruction of the disaster below-ground; it extends to the characters themselves. None of them, German or French, is given special prominence. They receive just sufficient portrayal to establish themselves as decent people of a kind likely to be working in these mining communities on either side of the France-German frontier. The pathos of the old French grandfather, an ex-miner whose grandson is involved in the disaster on his first day below-ground, is not the pathos of an actor working up an emotional role. His suffering is an extension of the anxiety of a whole community, a channel through which Pabst is able to express the intense feeling of all the relatives of the trapped and dying men. Similarly, there is a touching scene in which a woman with a worn and sunken face runs beside the slowly moving lorry which is carrying her German husband off as a member of the volunteer rescue expedition going over the border. She holds on to her child, the symbol of her link to this man who may not come back. It is like a parting before war, a parting which belongs to the life of a whole community.

The technique developed by Pabst derives in part from the Russian silent documentary films which he had seen, but whereas the outstanding Soviet directors of the 'twenties adopted certain forms of stylisation to offset the realism of their subjects (as, for example, in *Potemkin* or in *The Ghost that Never Returns*), Pabst aims directly at realistic effect. The famous brief episode of hallucination, when a trapped French miner hysterical with fear sees his masked German rescuer as if he were still an enemy on the battlefront, is obviously the kind of fantasy which arises naturally out of psychological realism. But Pabst shows himself to be a film-maker of depth and imagination in the way he uses the technical capacities of the new sound-film to dramatise the key situations in this story of disaster and human courage. It is this capacity of his to dramatise these situations without any loss of realistic atmosphere that gives his film a power which the years do not diminish.

There are many examples of this imaginative handling of people and situations in the film—the scenes inside the mine immediately following the explosions, the gradual enlargement of the running crowd of people summoned by the alarm from the pithead,* the crowd scenes at the gates when the waiting women, at first so desperate and demanding, eventually break up into passively waiting groups, sitting where they can as they face the inevitable hours while the search goes on for the bodies of their men, living and dead. With a cunning montage of shots involving static cameras gathering telling details now here, now there, and tracking cameras identified with the running crowd, while the sound track represents the ebb and flow of human cries and the clatter of running feet, Pabst builds up a sympathetic and anxious identification between the mining community and the audience which is to watch their suffering. Working in those early hectic days of sound, Pabst had the imagination often to impose complete silence on a scene. Often, too, he makes prolonged use of the simplest kind of natural sound, like the moaning roar which comes up from the mine-shaft when the old man climbs down to find Georges, the grandson he loves, or the intense pulse of an artificial respirator, or the simple echo of the old man's voice in the cavernous emptiness of the mine as he cries "Georges . . . Georges . . .", an echo which emphasizes like music the piteous anxiety of his search, or the gradually quickening rhythm of the alternate tappings when the three trapped Germans are discovered by the rescuers, and finally burst into peal after peal of hysterically happy laughter when they know that they are safe. This continuous close sympathy of Pabst with the dramatic content of the situations he is handling on the screen is the result of a sensitive artistic imagination, just as his recognition of the pictorial value of including, for example, the fantastic yet realistic scene of the German miners' bath hall, with its foliage of clothes slung on chains high above the naked men, adds at the same time a fine element of authenticity to the background of life in a mining community. Indeed every important shot is composed with care, so that the realistic qualities of the film are always served by an artist's eye for the formal beauties.

Kameradschaft survives, therefore, as the work of an artist, and not as an effective example of contemporary propaganda. Now that so many films have been made recently, particularly in Italy and America, with similar qualities of realism, we should be in a good position to appreciate Pabst's achievement, and not less enthusiastically for having to re-assess it.

*This sequence is described in greater detail in my essay in *Experiment in the Film* (Grey Walls Press), p. 55.

BOOK REVIEWS

THE THIRD MAN and THE FALLEN IDOL by Graham Greene (Heinemann 6/-)

THE NOVEL'S UNDENIABLE INFLUENCE on the cinema is hardly less important than the influence, less frequently admitted, of the film on the novel. Graham Greene, once himself a film critic, has absorbed into his work many of the manners of the cinema; his style has that concentration of effect, that direct visual quality, which seems to call for transfer to the screen; his material—especially in his "entertainments"—might have seemed unworthy of such a writer had not the cinema given its own respectability to the thriller with serious overtones. These qualities have been recognised by many adaptations, for various reasons unsatisfactory, of his works. *Brighton Rock* ignored the crisis of conscience which was the novel's mainspring; *This Gun For Hire* transformed his hair-lipped victim-hero into the immutable Alan Ladd; *Confidential Agent* and *The Ministry of Fear* reached the screen as clumsy adventures. The recent collaboration, as script writer, with Carol Reed has given Graham Greene the chance to bring his work to the screen on his own terms; he has not yet seized it fully.

When asked by Sir Alexander Korda for a script with a background of war-shattered Vienna, Greene decided to produce a preliminary draft in novel form: this is the text as published here. The film, he says, is "the finished state of the story", but in reading his original it becomes clear that the film was much more. In his story, Greene writes through the eyes of the business-like policeman, Calloway, and the whole affair becomes just another case for the police files. The major issues raised by the film—those with which Greene's original might be expected to have shown most concern—are the relationship between Holley (here Rollo) Martins, the hack writer of Westerns, and the enigmatic Harry Lime, and Martins' betrayal and killing of the man he still regarded as a friend. In the treatment Martins enters without reservations into his job as decoy, and his story has a relatively happy ending—Martins and Anna leave the funeral arm in arm: the moral issues are hardly explored.

The Third Man original treatment, as printed here, is interesting but curiously lifeless and mechanical—Greene appears to have regarded the writing of the script primarily as an assignment. It presents the mystery of the Third Man's identity, but after Lime's living appearance, at the point where the film expanded its scope, the treatment hustles to an almost peremptory conclusion. Minor characters, such as Sergeant Paine, or the old woman in Anna Schmidt's house, stood out in the film; here they are simply names in the text. The treatment gives a progression of events which the film was to bring into shape and focus. It also throws light on doubts felt by some audiences; they left the cinema with an unpleasant taste in the mouth; they felt that the moral conflict, the background of destruction, were used at times as the mainspring, at times as a decoration to the story. Greene says "we had no desire to move people's political emotions; we wanted to entertain them, to frighten them a little, to make them laugh. Reality . . . was only a background to a fairy tale". On the screen, reality has a habit of assuming its own importance.

The Third Man was expanded from an original idea considerably more lightweight than the final film; *The Fallen Idol*, from a short story, *The Basement Room*, was a contraction, with a shift in the whole meaning of the story to give the screen a more sympathetic subject. In the original, the child feels himself entangled to an unbearable degree in grown-up affairs; he loves Baines, the butler, but resents the strain put on him by Baines' appeals for secrecy; when the crisis comes, he gives the butler away (in the story Baines has killed his wife) to escape from his involvements. Clumsy asides indicate that the incident destroys the child's whole will to live, he dies years later with nothing accomplished. The film lightens the whole situation; Baines is no murderer; the boy, although frightened and miserable, is less desperately involved; the sense of intolerable strain and life-shattering tragedy is missing. But the film went beyond the story in providing a double perspective. *The Basement Room* pictures events through the child's eyes without any deep penetration of his mentality; the adult eye obtrudes itself. Reed was able to descend to the child's level of understanding; to encompass at once his reactions and the adult interpretation. *The Basement Room* is an alarming and distinguished story in its own right, well worth reprinting; it is merely the genesis of the film.

Greene's work in the cinema is interesting but so far uncertain. He seems to approach the medium in some trepidation; he is not sure that *The Basement Room* can be filmed; not sure that *The Third Man* can bear an unhappy ending; he allowed his own devastating ending to *Brighton Rock* (in which the girl had to hear Pinky's declaration of hate on the gramophone record after his death) to be turned into a happy ending for the screen. Carol Reed has brought into the cinema a writer who can do it great service. A film is strong enough to bear the weight of ideas, of unhappy endings; in working for the cinema Graham Greene need not confine himself to "entertainments".

PENELOPE HOUSTON

DIARY OF A FILM, by Jean Cocteau: translated by Ronald Duncan. Dennis Dobson, 10/6, 1950.

"LIVING IS A HORIZONTAL FALL", wrote Jean Cocteau in OPIUM twenty years ago. There was in other men, he added, a "fixative" which prevented their consciousness of the rapid passage of life from becoming intolerable, but this he could obtain only from opium. Since he abandoned the drug, it may be that he has found in filming another release from the bondage of time. The theme occurs constantly in this account of how he directed his first full-length film, *La Belle et la Bête* ("To break time up, turn it upside down and inside out, would be to triumph over the inevitable").

Whatever motives are involved, this vivid, intense book, excellently translated, leaves no doubt of Cocteau's passion for cinema. Indeed, in this running commentary on the realisation of a poet's dream "long seen on an invisible screen", his very love of the medium is responsible for a certain lack of balance. His intellect seems so fully engaged in overcoming the problems of an unfamiliar technique that his entries tell us far more of his methods with technicians than with actors. It may be that his long theatrical experience made

his direction of the players almost instinctive, but he says tantalisingly little about it. Moreover, as this is a journal of the shooting and editing only, we are told nothing about the preparation of the script.

Cocteau realised his dream only in the teeth of daunting pain and difficulties. He began shooting in August, 1945, when it was hard even to get a few extra sheets for the famous linen-drying scene. Electricity cuts were frequent, film stock was poor, and equipment kept breaking down. Besides the normal holdups and mishaps inseparable from film-making, and union restrictions as severe as in Britain, the unit had more than its share of bad luck. Marais developed carbuncles, and a horse fell on Mila Parély. Cocteau himself was smitten with an almost Job-like plague of infirmities. He endured weeks of misery, but eventually work had to stop for nearly a fortnight while he recuperated in hospital. Yet shooting was completed in sixteen weeks—a respectable schedule for so ambitious a picture.

Cocteau is quick to credit his success to the devotion of his artistes and technicians ("At last I have realised the dream of being not one person, but many"). This unity is itself a proof of good leadership, and Cocteau reiterates the "awful responsibility" of hiding his own doubts to avoid demoralising the unit. He brings the personalities of the equipe sharply into focus: the temperamental Bérard "smeared with charcoal, covered with perspiration and spots, his beard on fire, his shirt hanging out"; Alekan, methodical and impossible to hurry; the resourceful Clément. There are many stories of the patience and physical courage of Jean Marais: his moral support clearly meant a lot to the director.

Cocteau's problems were increased by his original approach. His impatience with details of continuity sometimes got him into trouble, but his ingenuity usually found a way out. He sought to create a fantasy at once realistic and poetic. By improvising much of the action on location he hoped to preserve spontaneity, and he kept nagging Alekan for being too arty ("My method is simple: not to aim at poetry"). These improvised scenes, like the opening horseplay with the sedan chairs, seem to me the most successful, those of spectacular magic being by comparison studio-bound and overloaded with Bérard's decor.

This book helps one to an understanding of the author rather than his film. Cryptic allusions to shots and scenes can recall the finished images only to those who know the film very well, and the stills are too poor to suggest its beauty. But the enthusiasm and courage of Cocteau emerge clearly. Indifferent to his own pain ("It would be criminal to make the film . . . reflect . . . my suffering".) he remained considerate of others even when he drove them hard. The price he paid was high. At the projection of the completed work he could see only "the memories of suffering attached to every foot".

DERICK GRIGS

THE SOUND TRACK

WITH THE RE-ISSUE of that unfortunate picture *While I Live* (under the new title of *Dream of Olwen*), our attention is again drawn to the power of the popular theme in plugging an otherwise unsuccessful film. A further spate of gramophone records which present various arrangements of Mr. Williams' melody serve to emphasize the process. The original recording by Charles Williams and his own orchestra (Columbia DX 1362) aroused slight interest, but it was not until a set of words were added and a record by the Luton Girl's Choir was issued (Parlophone R 3156) that things really started to hum. Since then, various versions have appeared and a dance music setting has been published.

The theme-song was invented in Great Britain, exported and exploited in America, and given subtlety in France. Recent screenings of *Le Million* have reminded us that it was the French who took the over-popular theme-song tradition to their hearts at a time when it was becoming such a vulgar device that one would have expected any intelligent film-maker to leave it severely alone. What an atmosphere those badly recorded, thinly orchestrated, unevenly balanced tunes give to their films! The fact is that the modern American or British theme-song is too slick to compete with those early French sound tracks. Today, the orchestration is superb, the recording is magnificent, the band is enormous—and the result tedious. The first bars of *Le Million* have more vitality than a symphony of modern thematic accompaniments. Only in a few outstanding examples, like *On the Town*, "Slaughter on Tenth Avenue Ballet", and passages from *Young Man of Music*, is the same feeling obtained today. Yet it is perhaps the economy with which music is used in French films that keeps them in a class of their own. Every bar counts; if the music is in danger of becoming a nebulous background, it is dropped entirely. One is reminded of the customer in a Bond Street hat shop, who was shown a plain hat without any decoration at all; the price was eleven guineas. When the lady complained that there was nothing for the money, the salesman said: "That is the whole point, Madam; you pay for the restraint". It takes a French director to see the point when it comes to films. Discretion means that the music, when it occurs, has far more significance. In examining the French examples of theme-song, you will find very little "plugging": the songs register more on their dramatic implication or context than the number of times they are played.

For the record collector, the melodies are as elusive and haunting as they are in the films. How does one obtain the theme-song of *Le Million*, the dance tune from *La Bête Humaine*, the theme-march from *A Nous la Liberté* or the love-song from *Remous?* If you have the time, a hunt through the second-hand record shops of Paris can produce some valuable discoveries; a number of the Jaubert numbers were recorded, such as his theme from *L'Atalante*, but, like all these early film melodies, they are not available in current catalogues. Even in this country, the field is not hopeless; for 6d, a recording of *Sous Les Toits de Paris*, with the original Sievier-Moretti orchestration was picked up recently from a junk shop. What memories this rather battered old disc can still conjure up!

Fortunately, one of the finest examples of French theme-melody is still to be had. It is a recording by the Orchestre Symphonique of Paris of Jaubert's "Valse Grise" from *Le Carnet de Bal* (Columbia DB 1767). This waltz is the theme of the film. On the record, we hear the fluttering, eerie sounds as the young widow recalls the ball at which she danced with the men listed on her gaily-decorated little card. The undulating visual images are accompanied by the string tremolos and the quivering of the vibraphone; suddenly, the picture becomes clear and we are taken into the impressionistic scene of the ball as visualised by the girl in her day-dreams. The sweeping waltz carries all before it as we receive fleeting impressions of the magnificent ball-room and the swirling costumes of the women. Later on in the film, the theme is distorted to suit the mood of the action, and in the famous sequence with the epileptic doctor in the quayside tenement, it becomes dis-

sonant and vicious, a cleverly-orchestrated echo of something that was once beautiful and fascinating.

This, however, is one isolated example. Of the themes from *Le Quatorze Juillet*, *Le Dernier Milliardaire* and *Le Million*, when the films have gone, nothing remains but an occasional glimpse of a phrase, a melody, a theme that now and again slips back to haunt you for ever.

JOHN HUNTLEY

TELEVISION

BEGINNING A NEW SERIES of critical reviews, the critic can reasonably be expected to indicate some, at least, of the standards of judgment he proposes to apply. Alas, this writer starts with none; he can only hope that some will emerge in time. One week's television viewing, however, was enough to blow most of his preconceptions sky-high.

The new receiver installed, it is some hours, let us suppose, before the next programme begins. The critic has plenty of time to gaze on the blank whiteness of the bulbous screen, and to theorise on what is likely to appear on that *tabula rasa*, to use John Grierson's term. Just as the first film critics before him leaned on the theatre and painting, so he now leans instinctively and naturally on television's predecessor, the film. Clearly, he muses, both the cinema and television make use of precisely the same medium, photographic moving images projected on to a rectangular screen to the accompaniment of electrically-reproduced sound. In both cases the greatest fluidity can be achieved; in films by cutting and dubbing, in television by switching from one camera to another, or even by using film itself. In theory, therefore, it is difficult to see any possibility of an "art" of television emerging independently of the art of the film.

On the contrary, it would seem that in striving to control his material, to fight against the large element of the unexpected and the fortuitous which lies in the natural event, the future producer of a work of television art may be compelled, in the end, to create it entirely as a film first.

In theory! But then the evening's television programme begins, and it gradually dawns on the critic that he is partaking of an experience which has surprisingly little to do with watching a film. He finds himself fascinatedly, and for hours at a time, watching material which, if presented in the same way on the cinema screen, would drive him out of the building in desperate boredom. Stanley Holloway, for example, or Sir Adrian Boult seen in medium close-up from virtually a single camera viewpoint for an entire quarter of an hour. How can one whose visual sense has been film-trained for years explain such a fact to himself, let along to others?

Between films and television there seem to be three main differences. First, one must concede the overwhelming importance of what it has become usual to call *immediacy*, the excitement of watching an event in the making, the constant suspense which comes from the fact that anything may happen. This, surely, is the attraction of watching, for example, the tennis at Wimbledon, despite a restricted camera position and poor light.

A second important difference, about which comparatively little has been said, is surely that of *scale*. Sitting at a comfortable viewing distance from a television set, and measuring the picture with a pencil held at arm's length, I find that the width of the picture measures about two inches on the pencil. Try the same experiment from a good seat in the cinema, and the picture is only a little larger; in fact a film friend in Stockholm (where advance booking and careful choice of seat is the rule) tells me he finds the best viewing position in a cinema is one in which the screen can be just covered by the open hand, held at arm's length. Yet how different the two pictures appear. Does the Parthenon seen at a distance make the same impression as a model of the Parthenon on a table, assuming both appear relatively the same size? In films, yes; but in real life, not at all. The mind seems to introduce some compensating factor which takes account not only of the apparent size of an object, but also of its distance, and which reports that, contrary to appearance, one thing is altogether bigger and more enveloping than another.

Whatever measurements on a pencil may tell us, the cinema screen is virtually the fourth wall of the auditorium on which move shadows larger than life; whereas the television screen is a miniature window within reach of our hands. Incidentally, one effect of this enormous reduction in scale is to reduce to a negligible quantity the sweep of view and movement one finds in the long-shot.

The third great difference, of course, lies in the viewing conditions. In the cinema one is consciously aware of being alone among strangers and in strange surroundings, and yet subconsciously part of a mass audience whose reactions one to a large extent shares, with heightened effect. The result of both states, conscious and subconscious, is the same, to hold one's attention to the screen and to induce some measure of identification of oneself with what is seen there. At home, the effect of the mass audience is lacking. The well-known surroundings are friendly and compete for a part of oneself. The cat is curled up on the rug, and the children's beds above creak as they reluctantly get into them.

So one savours this new experience. In a mood already to some extent detached, one looks through this small peephole in the sitting room into a world outside and beyond, and everything which is interesting to watch, whatever its form, seems to have a legitimate place there. It may be the cricket at Nottingham, a variety show from the Scala, Sidney Harrison playing Bach, Leslie Mitchell genially playing the fool in his efforts to make a pancake, a play from a London theatre—or even a film. But a film seems to have no advantage over any of the others; it is just one of the things one looks at through the peephole, and may, like the rest, be good, bad or indifferent.

Although I begin, therefore, with no standards of measurement to guide me, I do not begin entirely without a point of view. I propose to approach television with an entirely open mind, as a fresh kind of experience, and to accept whatever appears on the television screen entirely on its own merits. In particular (if I may make a point of this to readers of a film magazine) I propose to relegate to the background of my mind any feeling I have for films, because to attempt to impose it on this new and vigorous youngster appears to me a barren and short-sighted policy. At the same time, I shall keep an attentive eye for any attempts to use the television medium (if it is a medium) with originality and imagination.

I may say that I have not yet, in an admittedly brief viewing experience, seen striking evidence of any such attempts; perhaps in the next month I shall be luckier.

ERNEST LINDGREN

CORRESPONDENCE

Dickinson v. Koch

The Editor, SIGHT AND SOUND

Dear Sir,

When I invented the word *filmwright*, I was talking theory to a film society. My point was that the film societies have a duty toward the cinema: they are the intellectual spearhead of cinema audiences. They should prepare the way for the artists of genius who shall do for the sound film what Griffith, Eisenstein and Chaplin did for the silent. Then I tried to show how these artists, these filmwrights, would work and I suggested that the average approach to commercial cinema was wrong. The business man with his star system and his allocation of work in separate departments to writers, directors and so forth, was killing the development of the cinema by distortion.

I knew I should arouse someone with my "heretical" allusions to the lesser importance of screenwriting as a separate watertight compartment in the production process. And I am stimulated to find that a leading Hollywood screenwriter has taken up the challenge. But in doing so, Mr. Howard Koch has cunningly set his argument from the point of view of the average level of Hollywood. In doing so, too, he has revealed some horrifying details about that Oscar-conscious community which I particularly welcome as reserve ammunition on my side. But no one would say that Mr. Koch is typical of the Hollywood average. It would do him good to hear the genuine praise that his *Letter From An Unknown Woman* is earning these very days among our film connoisseurs. Why does Mr. Koch apologise for his reference to John Huston and William Wyler on the grounds that they are not typical of the average? The average is a bore and does not get us anywhere. Better to aim above the average, even if it means sometimes slipping below.

I agree with Mr. Koch that it would be crazy to hand the average director or writer the privileges of the filmwright. And I beg him to forget the average standards of Holly, Pine, Boreham and the other woods which have grown up in the field of cinema. Naturally the cinema is and should be available within reason to those who want solely to earn their bread and butter by it. But let us not imagine that pictures can only be made the commercial way.

I want the discriminating audiences which already exist to expand and organise themselves: I want them to encourage and circulate the works of first-rate artists, men and women who have something to say which is best said in terms of cinema. And such artists I call *filmwrights*, since no other term yet exists by which to describe them.

Now I ask Mr. Koch: would an Eisenstein of the future be content to remain the writer of the film he proposes to make? Would he be content, as most playwrights are, to hand his script to an interpreter to be visualised by an alien hand?

Already in the first fifty years of its existence the cinema has achieved moments, and indeed, whole films, which cannot be fully described in terms of literature, whose content if scripted would be expressed barely and scarcely recognisably. Pictorial tempo, acting performances, the creative use of sound, and experiment in the editorial process have created effects remote from the influence of the written word.

The filmwright who has become practised in the control of these elements and who finds he has something to express by their means, will develop his subject in words and diagrams to explain to his fellow craftsmen what he is aiming at. He will then by trial and error create on the screen and on the sound track the work of which he has written and drawn the intention on paper. It is a question of integrity in the artist.

Yours faithfully,
THOROLD DICKINSON

"All the King's Men"

The Editor, SIGHT AND SOUND

Dear Sir,

I cannot help feeling that Richard Winnington, in his article, *All The King's Men*, in your June issue, approaches the film from the wrong angle.

One must surely allow that Robert Rossen chose his method, to tell the story largely by implication, deliberately. Equally, shifting the interest of the original story, he chose to take Stark as his central figure, and I think the emphasis—though slight—on Burden's Landing and the opposition to Stark is adequate for his purpose.

Rossen must also have accepted the fact that his characters would tend to become lay-figures (though to a certain extent this is justified if one takes the film as a study with general application, not as a "transliteration" of the novel). Rather than gibing at the players because they won Oscars for their performances—as Mr. Winnington and Mr. Hope-Wallace do—one should consider how well they met the director's demands, and created three-dimensional figures within the limits allowed—but deliberately allowed—them.

Though Mr. Winnington's comparison of the film with *They Live By Night* is valid, it can only be a comparison, for a film is not necessarily bad because the director has not done something he has not tried to do. The whole difficulty of criticism is that one has to discover whether work is good in itself, not whether it matches up to an absolute standard.

Howard Koch, in his article last month, says "It is the persuasion of too many of its (Hollywood's) film makers in all categories that the audience will not 'understand' the implication of what they see on the screen unless it is spelt out in words". That can also be taken in a general sense, and I feel that Mr. Winnington, through discounting his knowledge of the novel, has artificially atrophied his sensibility to the point of putting himself in the position of that imagined audience. For me, Rossen tells his story logically, by means which, as has been said, are not without subtlety.

Yours faithfully,
MICHAEL HOGG

"Orphee"

The Editor, SIGHT AND SOUND

Dear Sir,

In reviewing *Orphee* in the July issue of SIGHT AND SOUND you rightly praise Auric for his score.

You are wrong, however, in attributing to him the "recurring tune for flute". This music was first heard in 1762: it is the "Dance of the Blessed Spirits" from Gluck's opera, "Orfeo ed Euridice".

Yours faithfully,
M. G. FULLER

The Editor acknowledges this letter, and various other letters, postcards and 'phone calls on the same subject, and is in no doubt of his error.

COMPETITION

Report on No. 5. In this competition, competitors were asked to write reviews of certain films in the manner of certain critics. We print the two most successful by "Beaugag" (25s.) and F. Aicken, 3, Bungalows, Edward Avenue, Larne, Northern Ireland (10s. 6d.), to whom book tokens have been sent. Although Kenneth Kinrade's review of *The Third Man* in the style of Richard Winnington did not win a prize, we are giving a special 10s. 6d. prize for his drawing, which we unfortunately have not space to reproduce.

Prize winners: C. A. Lejeune on *Letter From An Unknown Woman* (by "Beaugag")—

SEHNSUCHT IN LOWER REGENT STREET

I really don't know why anyone should want to make a film like *Letter From An Unknown Woman*, but since someone apparently did, it was, I think, wise to put Miss Joan Fontaine in it. For Miss Fontaine is our favourite Lesser Celandine. And then too, Mr. Louis Jourdan is there to trample on her in the most intriguing, if slightly broken, English to come to us from Old Vienna since Congress danced.

Although it is several hours too long, the picture does have some engaging and highly original story values. A handsome dissolute musician, bells, a duel, a mysterious letter, a dumb cavalry type with Austro-Hungarian papa and military band, waltzes, a sympathetic waiter, an old flowerseller, a baby (offstage and parthenogenetic, almost), its mother who dies before the picture starts really, and—don't look now, but I think this is where we came in—A Flashback.

It cannot be denied that *Letter From An Unknown Woman* is finely, even if a trifle over, wrought: as technically flawless and as unaware of the audience as a stonewalling innings by Mr. Walter Hammond in a four-day test at Old Trafford. Watching it, as Mr. Neville Cardus would say, is like conjugating the verb *s'ennuyer* in an exceptionally well-bred classroom—I am bored, thou art bored, is she bored? she is bored.

Josh Billings on *The Third Man* (by F. Aicken):—

Suspenseful, yet intelligent, "cops-and-robbers" set in post-war Vienna. Director Carol Reed has chosen more wisely from writer Graham Greene's efforts and returns to that fountain of good box-office, the underworld. True, the highbrow approach needlessly delays the punch-packed Hitchcockian climax and there is no Bobby Henrey to safeguard feminine appeal, but the expensive American cast and unusual zither music more than compensate. A cunning blend of low and highbrow appeal it should prove a potential money-spinner with the masses, and give the intellectuals something to twitter about.

PRODUCTION.—Carol Reed has taken himself rather seriously of late but here he shows signs of coming out of the ivory tower. The settings are grim, the characters are a bit too realistic for the popular palate, but Valli and Orson Wells supply a welcome shot of glamour. The zither music alone could conceivably hit the jack-pot. And there is even the hint of a happy ending. Despite the long-haired trimmings it's the thick-ear and romantic elements that will get it over. Verb sap.

POINTS OF APPEAL.—Thrilling plot, sly sex interest, terrific climax, stars, music and, outside the cap-and-muffler trade, Carol Reed.

Among Honourable Mentions we quote:—

C. A. Lejeune on *Letter From An Unknown Woman*—". . . This time she's a girl led astray by a rake of a musician who abandons her. Undeterred, she bears his child, puts up her hair, and marries someone else, for security. Before dying from typhus, she commits her autobiography to long-hand on crackling note-paper and sends it to her ex-lover, whose faded charm is now apparent. . . . When it was all over I crept away like a mouse, wondering how many of my colleagues were carrying tear-stained hankies too". (Brian Ansell).

Gavin Lambert on *The Third Man*:—"One is aware, in *The Third Man* of, notably, Reed's removal from his subject: the personality is at once austere and violent, the undercurrents of background fascinating. Its story is of little value: essentially a thriller set against a ravaged empty city—Vienna—observed with great delicacy and wit and a controlled savagery of detail. The camera gives a fascinating performance (one notices on the credits the names Robert Krasker and Stan Pavey) and several scenes are beautifully handled. . ." (Charles Higham).

Richard Winnington on *On The Town*:—"Graduating from early backstage evocation, the American musical has rivalled the persistent gangster idiom, via the Astaire-Rogers era; the Betty Grable technicolor spectacles, and weathered a deterioration in Iturbi-Melchior-Dorsey pseudo-classics. *On The Town*, directed by Gene Kelly and Stanley Donen, brilliantly supervenes the style incorporating a background of life, and introduces three sailors (Gene Kelly, Frank Sinatra and Jules Munshin) on 24 hours leave. They embark on a speedy, gay dance venture entitled 'New York, New York', impelled by a tired docker's refrain. . ." (Alan Crueman).

Richard Winnington on *The Third Man*:—". . .The fact is that, abetted by Anglo-American millions, Graham Greene's shallow profundities, and his own fatally adaptable technique, Carol Reed achieved on location in ravaged Vienna a film no less artificial than if he had shot it at Shepperton. . . There is more humanity in one reel of any of Reed's earlier and (no doubt to him) cruder efforts, than there is in all the smart angles and polished cutting of his latest creation". (Derick Grigs.)

Competition No. 7. "Famous First Words". We believe that the great ones of the cinema were born into it, and their first utterances bore witness to this fact. You are asked to suggest what might have been the first remark of *three* of the following, as soon as speech had been granted to them. Orson Welles, Anna Neagle, Sam Goldwyn, Erich von Stroheim, Jean Cocteau, J. Arthur Rank, Greta Garbo, Cecil B. de Mille, Marlene Dietrich, Charles Chaplin, Carol Reed and Errol Flynn. Closing date, November 20th. Entries, with "Competition" marked in the top left-hand corner, should be sent to SIGHT AND SOUND, British Film Institute, 164, Shaftesbury Avenue, London, W.C.2.

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NATIONAL FILM LIBRARY for *All Quiet on the Western Front, Le jour se leve, The Bottle, The White Rose, We from Kronstadt, October.*

FILMHISTORIKA SAMLINGARNA for *Kameradschaft.*

METRO-GOLDWYN-MAYER for *The Asphalt Jungle, If you should Feel like Singing, State of the Union, Song of Russia, Ninotchka,* portrait of John Huston.

PARAMOUNT PICTURES for *Sunset Boulevard, The Dividing Line, Hail the Conquering Hero.*

20TH CENTURY-FOX for *When Willie comes Marching Home, The Iron Curtain, The Grapes of Wrath.*

COLUMBIA PICTURES for *Mr. Deeds goes to Town, All the King's Men.*

BRITISH LION for *The Wooden Horse.*

FILM TRADERS for *Paisa.*

PRODUCTION L.P.C. for *Le soif des hommes.*

GANNA-JEANNIC for *Domenica d'Agosto.*

BLUE RIBBON for *La Vie commence demain.*

FLAIR for the portrait of Ford.

CORRESPONDENTS

U.S.A.: Harold Leonard. France: Francis Koval. Italy: Frances Mullin Clark.

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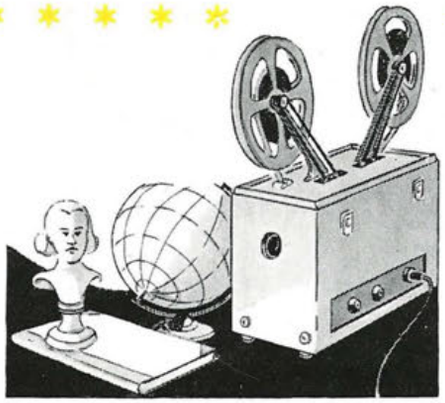
SIGHT & SOUND
Publication Date

Owing to circumstances beyond our control, this issue and the two previous ones of SIGHT AND SOUND have been delayed. We shall resume our regular publication date as soon as conditions in the printing trade return to normal



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